

THE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

WIRE

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DJ Vadim

musique
concrète
mixer

Bandulu

machine-age
minimalists

Chris Cutler

opposition rock

Rammellzee

Hip-hop's
Garbage God

**Jah
Wobble's**

jukebox

Myra Melford

Roy Montgomery

CAN

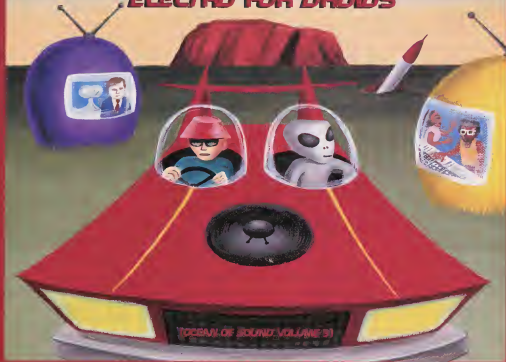
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THE WIRE

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Cover photograph of Can in Cologne **Dean Bailey**
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editor's idea

"I don't think the reality (or unreality) of it has settled in with any of us here just yet." The line comes from Bill Murphy, e-mailing from the New York offices of the Axon label just a few days after the news broke of the death from a heart attack of the drummer Tony Williams.

Williams died in a Los Angeles hospital on 23 February following what should have been a routine gallstone operation. There are rumours flooding in from the other side of the World Wide Web that his death could have been avoided had the LA medical team been more alert to the critical nature of his condition, but until speculation solidifies into stone cold fact, let's concentrate on some of the details of a life that was remarkable even by jazz standards.

One of the last acts of Tony Williams's professional life, maybe the very last, was his participation in the second instalment of a recording project called Arcana, instigated by Bill Laswell, administered by Bill Murphy, which was directly inspired by the music Williams recorded in the late 60s and early 70s with guitarist John McLaughlin and organist Larry Young (aka Khalid Yasin) as Lifetime.

Williams, a prodigy who had performed with the two towering giants of jazz percussion, Art Blakey and Max Roach, while still a child, was thrust into a public arena at an improbably early age. He joined Miles Davis's group in 1963 aged 17, and via the murderous combination of a radical aesthetic sensibility and stunning technical abilities, almost single-handedly altered the direction of the music of one of the greatest artists of the 20th century. So Williams is valorised by jazz fans as a musician who turned notions of jazz-time on their head, galvanising Miles into yet another sustained period of creative activity. But for a later fan-musician like Bill Laswell, Lifetime provided a more provocative model for a music that united both personal interests and the prevailing social and cultural imperatives into one unruly package, applying the flexible, improvisatory flavour of jazz to the bone-crushing intensity of hard rock.

Like Miles's contemporaneous shift towards an increasingly amorphous, electric music, Williams's work in Lifetime was regarded as a betrayal of his earlier pure jazz life, a cynical attempt at commercialism. But the group's genesis, as revealed in the sleeve notes to a new anthology of the music Lifetime recorded for the

Polydor label, was more complex. Inevitably, Williams felt the need to define himself anew, away from the ultimately claustrophobic embrace of Miles's patronage, but Lifetime was also inspired by the lounge-jazz organ trios he had played in as a youth in Boston, as well as his desire to perform music that reflected his admiration for improving rock groups such as Cream, The MC5 and The Jimi Hendrix Experience, and that moved beyond the hermetic world of jazz to mirror America's increasingly incendiary political climate.

"It was an emergency for me to leave Miles," he is quoted as saying, explaining the title of the first Lifetime album, *Emergency*. "I wanted to play an emerging music that was my own." About the group's 1970 *Turn It Over* album, he says: "Recording that album wasn't a pleasant experience. There was a lot going on socially at the time and it was a reaction to that. There was a lot of tension and anxiety. The title was about turning over society. The album art was black, the liner notes were very hard to read — it was aggressively antagonistic."

As it transpired, Lifetime came apart rapidly due to a combination of public and critical hostility and the conflicting personalities of the group members. Williams was so affected by the experience that he quit music altogether between 1973 and 75 when he returned it was to play an inevitably less ambitious version of the music he had been making with Miles a decade earlier.

Unlike Bill Laswell, I can't claim any strong feelings for Lifetime's music; in comparison, similar experiments being conducted at the time by Miles, The Herbie Hancock Sextet, even Williams's Lifetime partner Larry Young on the long-forgotten Lawrence Of Newkirk record, seem more rich in future possibilities, more open-ended, less weighed down by self-conscious virtuosity and metal bombardment. But I remain aware that the first Arcana project, a trio made up of Williams, Laswell and guitarist Derek Bailey, was responsible for one of 1996's most sensational moments, *The Last Wave*, a record which finally seemed to vindicate the music Williams had dreamed of making a quarter of a century earlier. Meanwhile, the second Arcana project has become a valediction, "a tribute to Tony," as Bill Murphy writes, "a document to show that his talents extend way beyond the limits of jazz drumming. You'll hear it soon enough." **TONY HERRINGTON**

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letters

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or fax: 0171 287 4787, or e-mail: the_wire@ukonline.co.uk
Every letter published wins a FREE CD

Bernie's in

Well, good to see something on Bernhard G nter at last (*Exotic Audio Research*, *The Wire* 157) even if it was a bit short. Go on, do a big article on trente oreaux.

Clive Bell's review of *Night Passage* (*The Wire* 157) was superficial. I think you'll find, Clive, that if you strap on some headphones and listen to "Untitled 1/96" you'll be genuinely stunned by what you hear low rumblings it ain't. Bernhard works at a kind of sub-atomic level of sound which means you need to get up close to it. Once you do, you realise just what awesome energies he's playing with. All the drone and tone music, and endless twistings and turnings of Electronica and Techno, come nowhere near what this guy's doing. He's a composer, and quite probably the only real modern composer on the planet right now. He's someone to pay attention to. Be there, that's what I say!

Aside from that, thanks for the *Exotic Audio Research* piece. I should open people up to what's coming.

Paul v e-mail

Will done

Will Montgomery's 'review' of Bobby Previte's new CD (*The Wire* 157) describes his solo on "Three Minute Heels" as sounding like a whole battery of percussionists. This is because it is: the band all play percussion on this track. There is a photo of them doing so in the booklet. How closely does Will listen to the discs he reviews? (How many arms does he think Mr Previte has?) The more cynical of your readers may think your reviewers don't pay much attention to their tasks.

Hywel Davies via e-mail

The big chill

Being a long term reader, I have been impressed with the constant evolution of *The Wire*. Unlike other music magazines, it never fails to amaze me how perceptive the articles are. It is also to your credit that coverage is given to artists who are totally ignored by the media. So it came as a very welcome surprise to see an overview of John Zorn (*The Wire* 156). Despite the somewhat self-mocking remark on name-dropping, I can recall that *The Wire* got there first with features on *The Big Gundown* back in 1985.

I was also pleased to see that Voodoo has finally been given the credit that was long overdue. It was a shame that in the rush for albums by Wynton/Courtesy/Jazz

Bill and Ben

In Ben Watson's article on Bill Drummond (*The Wire* 157), the pathetically ill-conceived stunts of The KLF are once more exposed. Unfortunately, Ben Watson joins, despite attempts at distancing himself from, the swelling ranks of the self-deluded pseudo-intellectuals who cannot square the weak conceptualisation of this fraudulent duo in any sort of meaningful or even amusing context.

Not only is Drummond left unchallenged to pontificate stupidly about art and 'the greatness of pop', but is actually admired for his supposed deep-thinking subversions of class, culture and art under capitalism. The K Foundation's destructive actions, far from 'social revolution', are the cute meanderings of very rich and bored men only supported and defended by similar fans of thin, 'Situationalist' jokes no worse than the despicable antics of the avant garde, but certainly no better. Even musically their records are not up to scratch. Far from being 'pop classics', the JAMMS/Time Lords/KLFs work on disc is virtually unlistenable — the rave culture equivalent

Warriors etc, one of the finest neo-bop albums of the 80s was missed, because Zorn chose not to look like he had stepped out of *The Face*. Only Bobby Watson's *Love Remains* has equalled it from that period. It should also be pointed out that *The Wire* induced Voodoo in its Top 50 albums of 1986.

One pragmatic fact remains: despite the wealth of magnificent music, Zorn has been frozen out by critics and media alike because he is too open-minded for his own good. In that respect he falls within the tradition of innovators like Frank Zappa, Derek Bailey, Anthony Braxton and Ornette Coleman who are/were universally ignored. But such open-mindedness is the reason that *The Wire* is such an essential buy. Let's hope that there will be features of this nature on The Fall, Swans, King Tubey, Ornette, etc. You did not even mention Zorn's version of The Stooges' 'TV Eye'.

Rob Jones Letchworth

Actually, it's the Zornmaster himself who's doing the freezing out. For a long time now Zorn has refused to have any dealings at any level with what he regards as the 'commercial' media (that includes *The Wire*, apparently) — no interviews, no advertising, no PR, nothing. But John does approve of barones and 'fals' publications, whatever they might be. — Ed



of The Bease Boys' limp, collage kid redefinition of rap. Linking The KLF favourably to Malcolm McLaren was a bad opening gambit.

Worse, Drummond's crass sexism is unremarked upon by 'socialist' Watson. Sympathy for the Yorkshire Ripper. What? If Drummond had any idea about being subversive he would plough his spare pocket-change into the Liverpool Dockers Fund. Now that would be a radical, if unspectacular, gesture...

Mark Goodall Leeds

Give me refuge

In *The Wire* 153 you had an article on the wonderful John Fahey with lots of info on up-coming events, one of which was the issue of *City Of Refuge* 'in November on the Tim/Kerr label (through Mercury)'. Can you tell me what happened to it? Is it available? None of my usual sources seem to have heard of it, and my salvagards are aching after so many months.

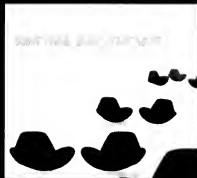
Jim Botten Liversage

Apparently, *City Of Refuge* was finally released in the US on 18 February. There doesn't seem to be any plans to release the CD in the UK, and its availability on import is also suspect. Interested parties might try writing to Fahey's own Reverend label at PO Box 198732, Nashville, Tennessee 37219-8732, USA. — Ed

Corrections

Issue 157 The Jungle Brothers' forthcoming *Raw Deluxe* album will be released in the UK by Gee Street/V2, not Island as stated at the foot of last month's JB's feature. The correct contact address for the Metamorphose label, as featured in last month's issue, should have read: 50 Passage Des Ateliers, 38140 Rives, France. Fax: CD 33 1 476 65 27 74. □

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soundings

april



Fabian Das Baul

Festivals/Special Events

Ecua The London global music meltdown continues into April with performances by St Yared's Ethiopian Choir (Union Chapel, 30 March), Raben Das Baul in collaboration with 23 Skidoo's resident anthropologist Sam Mills (Union Chapel, 31), meditative vocalist Chai Goodchild (October Gallery, 2 April), David Toop reading from *Ocean Of Sound* (October Gallery, 4) and Juan O'Harcos Gonzalez's Cuban Big Band (Walemans Arts Centre, 5). The festival also includes the Easter Sunday Big Chai with appearances by The Grids, Richard Morris, Summi, Endemic Voice and more (Union Chapel, 30 March, 4pm-midnight, £10/£6, 01 71 226 3750). All sales information can be gleaned on 0171 226 1686.

New Azusa The third and final concert in this UMC/Young It season of renegead music from around the world is a sonic soundscape between Derek Bailey and Tokyo's angular power trio The Rains, as heard on their 1995 *Totok* CD. Support comes from trumpet sampling duo Spaceheads, featuring Andy Ogleman (London Purcell Room, 3 April, 8pm, £8/£5, 0171 960 4242).

Video Positive 92 This year's Liverpool and Manchester based festival of electronic and video art is titled 'Escaping Gravity'.

exploring the gathering momentum of technological development and its effect on the creative arts. Among many events encompassing dance, film, performance and installation media, the musical content includes screenings of short films by Stakes/Asher Twin, Tomato Design, George Barber and others (Manchester Cornerhouse, 12 April), Colin Farrow's *Space: The Vinyl Frontier*, an event drawing on a huge vinyl archive (LIPA, 15), a club night at Manchester Hacienda with DJing from Roni Size, Krust, MC Dynamite and DJ Q (16), and a sound installation by Stock, Hansen & Walkman's *Plant World* (Liverpool Bluecoat, 18). The festival runs from 11-20 April, full details of all events on 0151 707 9533.

Chatham International Jazz Festival Highlights of this West Country improvisation event, taking place between 3-6 April, include Paul Moran's Trio 2000 (3), Creative Jazz Orchestra with John Taylor and Steve Argüelles, Phil Woods and Gordon Beck, former Coltrane pupil Alan Skidmore's quartet pay tribute to his teacher, John Surman's choral *Poems And Songs*, Courtney Pine Group, Chico Freeman Quintet featuring Cecil McBee (all on 5), Roy Powell Group with Arlie Andersen and John Marshall, John Etheridge's Blue Spirits, Nigel Kennedy

Selected highlights of the month's live events, happenings, club spaces and broadcasts

The Johnny Griffin Quartet, Jackie McLean & Cedar Walton, and The Art Ensemble Of Chicago (all on 6). Times, prices and venues vary; contact the Box Office on 01242 227979.

Matchless Nights A new series of monthly gigs curated by AMM drummer Eddie Prevost for the spring and summer. Eddie will perform solo, and there'll be a recital of Cornelius Cardew piano music by pianist John Tibury. Finally, Sonic Boom's EAR collective shake the foundations. London Spitz, 109 Commercial Street, E1, 10 April, 8pm, £5bc, 0171 247 9747.

On Stage

A Certain Ratio Latin-inflected veteran Industrial Funk unit. London Jazz Cafe, 10 April, 10/£8, 0171 344 0044.

Acid Brass Fresh from a debut in Liverpool last month, this acclaimed brass band arrangement of rave tunes by A Guy Called Gerald, 808 State, KLF and more gets its first London airing. London QEH, 19 April, 7.45pm, £9, 0171 960 4242.

Crooklyn Dub Consortium UK manifestation of the Wordsound libresco. Skiz Fernando and buddies connect at ya live and direct from NYC. London Jazz Cafe, 21 April, 10/£8, 0171 344 0044.

Dave Douglas/Kenny Wheeler Rare chance to catch the *Masada* trumpeter in action on a UK stage with his New York sextet, here with trumpeter Wheeler in a tribute to the late Booker Little. Birmingham Custard Factory, 26 April, 8pm, £7/£5, 0121 604 7777.



Jean-Jacques Perrey

EAR + Labradford + Howcrack A night of drone-rock headed up by Sonic Booms Experimental Audio Research outfit, featuring AMM sideman Eddie Prevost and colleagues, plus Virginia's moody Moby operation. Labradford and the edgy Howcrack. London Garage, 5 April, £6, 0171 607 1818.

Imous Launch Two nights of improv from the horses' mouths, at the launch of a bunch of new duo recordings on Derek Bailey's own long-running label. The companies for each session are: Steve Beresford, Roger Turner, Derek Bailey, John Butcher and Dren Marshall (19 April), and Roger Smith, Neil Metcalfe, Alan Wilkinson and Stefan Jaworski (10). London Red Rose Club, 129 Seaworth Road, N7, 7.30pm, £6/£4, 0171 263 7265.

Steve Jansen/Richard Barbieri/Mark Kase The former *Jasperian Tree* crew trio in a live retrospective of their recent group and solo work. London LA2, 12 April, £5bc, 0171 434 0403.

Kumped Delores Hungarian avant rockers with close links to Chris Cutler's Retri label in a rare UK visit. London Club Integral, The Spitz, 109 Commercial Street, E1, 22 April, 8pm, £6/£5, 0171 247 9747.

Chiekh Lâ Two dates for this interse Senegalese malax star, a protégé of Youssou N'Dour. London Jazz Cafe, 7-8 April, 12/£10, 0171 344 0044.

Louise Celebrating the 21st anniversary of this dynamic contemporary music ensemble formed by conductor Odaline de la Martinez, with renditions of pieces by Melinda Hoover, Jocelyn Pook, Sinead Jones and Jerry Rodin, with more to follow in coming months. London St. Johns, Smith Square, 17 April, 7.30pm, 0171 222 1061.

Musikbox with Martin Schuster. Full-on display of Hungarian folk-inflected sounds from this singer who's worked with Towering Inferno. London Barbican, 27 April, 7.30pm, £10/£8.50, 0171 638 8891.

Evans Parker + Chris Cutler etc A host of five musicians play at the annual UMC benevolent fund concert this month: other acts include Peter Cosack, Eddie Prevost, John Butcher, Alan Wilkinson London ICA, 20 April, 7pm, £8/£6, 0171 930 3642.

Jean-Jacques Perrey Revitalised after the

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soundings

rediscovery of his seminal 60s track "EW", the tape-composition pioneer appears live at Brighton Jubilee (30 March) and London Jazz Café (31. 01.71 344 0046). He also delivers a seminar on looping, sampling and sampling techniques at Birmingham Music, 2 April. 0121 440 4221

Smith Quartet The impetuous string quartet play new music by Kevin Volans. Simon Emmerson, Steven Mackay and Walter Hus, adored and abetted by an electric trio: soul system, London Purcell Room, 1 April, 7.30pm, £10/£8, 0171 960 4242

Jon Spencer Blues Explosion A true American master of chaos arrives in the UK with his juggernaut of a group. London Forum, 27 April. 5pm. 0171 344 0044

Karlheinz Stockhausen The Tomtears' transcended choral work, Sommerg, is

performed here by London Sinfonietta Voices, who also sing a fairly by Slinky Acylite Cornelius Cardew. London QEH, 6 April, 7pm, £10/£6, 0171 960 4242

Tricky Touring with a full group, Bristol's lord of venge, sets it all hang out at Birmingham Cube Club (10), Glasgow Barrowlands (11), Nottingham Rock City (13), Southampton Jazz Hall (14), London Hackney Empire (Leicester show 15), London Shepherd's Bush Empire (16), Sheffield Union (18), Liverpool Royal Court (19), Leeds T&C (20), Norwich UEA (21)

Steve Waltham plus guests 21st century urban music collaboration between London's funk-aware saxophonist and a roster of co-conspirators that include a jazz quintet, DJ's Squarespinner and Le Rouge, vocalists and more. London QEH, 27 April, 7.45pm, £12.50/£10, 0171 960 4242

Club Spaces



Beat Weir Sonic strangeness and bizarre beats, with special appearances from Reel Snapper's Richard Tarr (16 April), Dub Pistols (13), Daniel Pemberton (20) and Gaggini (27). London Jazz Bistro. Sundays, 7.30pm-midnight, £2. 0171 236 B112

Blood Sugar Andrew Weatherall, Rick Hopkins, Alex Knight and guests hook up for this monthly night of loose limbed grooviness. London Blue Note, 4 April, 10pm-3am, \$8/£6, 0171 729 8440

Electronic Lounge Celebrating three years of digital pumping with host Robin Rimbaud and DJ Tony Morley. London ICA, 1 April, 9pm-1am, £2.50/£2, 0171 498 3032

EVA New weekly night of spacey music and vocals, with regular DJ's on rotation pulling drum n' bass, space jazz fusion, stellar funk, Brazilian exotica and Indian vibes into their orbit. London St Mark's Club. 59 Wardour Street. W1. Tuesdays, 4.30/£3, info 0181 542 8691

Glitcher Club Impassioned wilderness and music's vibrations are on the menu at Hugh Mischka's weekly jammin'. Russian Gypsy! Dasha Feigen plays in duo with John Russett (14 April) and the gritty improv of Alan Wilkins/Horus/Farco/Steve Noble gets an airing (11). Project DARK, whose incredible assortment of records made from metal wood, hair and foot and rocket-assisted turntables, are featured in this month's Multimedia section, 'perform' alongside Keith

Tyler's Dreamtime and Susannah Hart (18). London Water Rats. Fridays, 8.30pm, £3/£2, 0171 B37 7269

Kosmiche Former Cluster member Ruediger plays live on stage, Ausgang provide Textonic ambience, and regular in-house-obsessed DJ's Plenton Chalk and Norman Coquet (not their real names) drop Can and Stereolab-type wavings. Plus trippy visuals and a magazine. London Upstairs at the Garage, 12 April, 10pm-2.30am, £5/£4, 0171 607 1818

Mukamuse Weekly assemblage of deep downtown funk, special guests confirmed for this month are Filter, local artists Amalgamation Of Sound (8 April) and DJ Vladimir (21). London Clinic, 13 Gerard Street, W1. Tuesdays, 10pm-3am. £4/£3, 0171 734 9836

PM Sessions The two rooms of the Jazz Bistro and Smithsells host Ed Rush, Trace and Reg (2 April), Kane and Future Forces from Remogade Hardware, plus Terry Farley (9). DJ's Randall, Raj and Stretch, plus Africa Blues live (16). DJ's: Ed, Sue, MC Dynamite, Carl Brown and MC Creed (23); and Foodnoise, MC Skibadee and EBTG's Ben Watt (30). London Smithsells. Wednesdays, 10pm-2.30am, £5/£4, 0171 236 8112

Rumpus Room Sonic exotica with residents the Merry Pranksters and weekly guest DJ's London Fitz & Fink, Ge Portland Street, Sundays, 7pm-midnight, £3/£2, 0171 388 0588

Saavage Machine God Is My Co-Alt! confirmed for 18 April at the weekly post-rock/noise/funk London Hippo & Anchor, Upper Street, N1. Fridays, 8pm-1am, £5/£4, 0171 354 1443

Scratch Matt Herbert does his apron for the debut of his new cooking/campy project, Dr Roberts' Conkery. London. Plus Wilchmen and Peter Kraut on the decks and DATS. London Sept, 109 Commercial Street, E7, 17 April, 7pm-midnight, £6/£4, 0171 228 6616

Soul Static Sound No final details as we go

Radio

National

BBC Radio 1

Andy Kershaw Monday 8.30-10.30pm World Music from all quarters. folk, roots, reggae and more. **John Peel** Tuesdays-Thursdays 8.30-10.30pm The best place to keep up with new rock, indie, Techno, Jungle, Electronic, dub and the legendary session.

Ove in The Jungle Friday 10pm-midnight. DJs provide hour-long broadcast mix.

Annie Nightingale Saturdays 2-4am Chilled, eclectic sounds for the open-minded

BBC Radio 3

Glowsticks Sunday 9.45-11.15pm Radio play about the nuclear industry by quirky tape composer Lance Dorn with music by Idrone Kowalek.

Phing H. Monday 10.45-11.15pm Mark Russell and Robert Sandoff's new weekly selection of avant garde rock, art, contemporary classical, etc. This month, broadcasting live recordings from the New Music Festival.

Rear And Now Friday 10-12pm Contemporary music. Magazine: interview, record reviews, sessions. This month live music from Phish's State Of The Nation Festival (14 April), new music from The Nash Ensemble (11), Sinfonia 21 at concert (18) and the Toolboxes mix play New Complex composers (25).

Impressions Saturday 10-10pm 1-4pm Modern electronic music in interview and on record. Includes studio session by the Flat Thomas and Phil Penson quartet. Sunday (12 April)

Regional

BBC Radio

Soundscape Sunday 3-5pm Ashley Franklin plays monumental Electronic, contemporary, classically inspired. New Age and Ambient.

BBC Greater London Radio (GLR)

Charlie Gillett Sunday 7-9pm Rock, roots, club, World Music, blues, R&B and more.

BBC Leamshire

On The Wire Saturday 12-2pm Steve Barker's seasoned New Music mix, dub, experimental, electronics, out rock, free forms and more.

BBC Merseyside

The Late World Music Friday 12.30-2.30am Out rock, psychedelia, Jungle, avant dance, world.

Interviews and guest plays in featured segments.

CG Radio (Gillingham)

The Garden of Earthly Delights Friday 1-3pm-Zam Zam Queen's blend of avant rock to electronic, extra with techno soundtrack.

Kiss 100 FM (London)

Knuff Cuts Wednesday 7-9pm Latest drum n' bass, sung by Kerry Ken and DJ Hipe.

Give It Up Wednesday 2-4am Specialty recorded sessions and in-studio appearances.

Intelligent Drum 'N' Bass Friday 12-2am Fabio and Grooverider rise out the jams.

Solid Steel Saturday 1-3pm Plug-deck mayhem from Coldcut and the Nasty crew.

The Chill Out Zone Sunday 6-7pm Paul Thomas's experimental Ambient, dub and Electronic mix.

Giles Peterson Sunday 8-11pm Eclectic soul jazz interventions plus Nu and Old School electronic innovations.

Kiss 102 FM (Manchester)

Late Night Dance Soundcheck Mondays 10pm-2am Matt Thompson's besties 4, from Orbs to Tonesse.

Do It After Dark 'N' Rem Show Mondays 2-4am Tuff Jungle with XTC and Marcus.

800 State Friday 4-6pm Something for the weekend from the veteran crew.

Alpha Waves Saturday 4-6pm Environmental, medical and technological with Stuart James.

Boogies Sunday 4-6pm House and beyond with Autechre's Sean Booth and Rob Brown.

1544 (South London)

Shurp A & Needle Sunday 9-10pm John Kennedy spins out rock, dub, Electronic, experimental.

Ambient, hip-hop, plus live studio jams.

to press, but the label should remix its own grandmaster if it could kick off a new monthly series of events featuring Soul Static DJs, instrumentalists and vocalists. London: CA, 17 April, £2.50/£2, 9pm-1am, 0171 930 3647. **The Spawzi** Particle acceleration from Kingfisher Bristol, aka Bedouin Ascent, Freeform & Bit Tonic, preview their forthcoming collaboration EP, and there's an exhibition of large-scale prints and new images by Sheffield's Designers Republic. London: Cale Internet, 22-24, Sutherland Palace Road, SW1, 2-4 April, 7-11.30pm, £3/£2.50, 0181

BB3 0972

Yeni Luke Vibert's special together a 'Wagon' CD versus Play (gg) two and a half hours of world tape sounds and secret DAT recordings. Plus guests Boyz n' the Beat and Platinum Dust. London: Brighton George N, 144 Brixton Hill, 11 April, 8pm-2am, £6/£4, 0171 561 9656.

The Wireless This eclectic musical gathering returns with a new slot at the Koba Bar, 11 St Martin's Court, Leicester Square, WC2, Fridays from 11 April, 7-11pm, free, 0171 420 5626.

Soundings items for the May issue should reach us by **Friday 11 April**

to rococo rot. veiculo

cd/lp out now
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city slang

GANGER
FORE
cd/double lp

THE THIRD EYE FOUNDATION
GHOST
cd/lp

70

experimental
audio
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the golden
experiment



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Porter Ricks

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Chrome / FORCE INC.

chrome 9 CD/DLP Panacea - Low Profile Darkness

Soon.....
MP 38 CD/LP Electric Ladyland IV -
incl. DJ SPOOKY, ALEC EMPIRE, TECHNO ANIMAL,
DJ VADIM, PANACEA, WORDSOUND and more...

bites



Michael Prime Secret life of plants

"A lot of my work is based around the idea of trying to reveal the hidden sounds that are around us all the time which we don't have the sensory organs to pick up on," says Michael Prime, "whether I'm amplifying very tiny sounds or making plants audible through the bio-activity translator or using shortwave signals. Eventually I'd like to bring in things like cosmic rays, gamma radiation, x-rays, the whole spectrum that we don't have sense organs for and make music with them."

Michael Prime's third solo album, *Cellular Radar*, represents three years of work. Rather than the pure documentary format favoured by sound artists such as Chris Watson, Joe Banks and Stephen McGroovy (see *The Wire* 157), Prime uses a variety of organic sources and technological processes to generate complexity. His constantly unfolding tape works use classic tape techniques in conjunction with feedback systems and analogue processing. Since nature is the source of the

most complex and diverse structures and relationships (indefinitely so), his predisposition towards natural sounds doesn't preclude his work being frequently dense and occasionally violent.

"Living and working in an urban environment, I've got the sensory bombardment that comes with it," he says. "So I suppose that's a dialectic I have in my work."

Perhaps the tension between straight field recordings and manipulated sounds is also a reflection of the tension he experiences by day in his work as a conservationist for one of the London Boroughs. He must negotiate with council and developers to maintain the small pieces of interesting habitat that remain in an otherwise built-up environment.

Michael Prime's twin interest in electronic music and natural phenomena began at the age of 12 when he built a simple shortwave radio from a kit. Fascinated by the range of sounds and the intermodulation of different signals, he discovered that these were the sounds of man-made signals being distorted and reflected in the ionosphere and the earth's magnetic strata. These onion-like layers are constantly changing according to the weather, the earth's rotation, the sunspot cycle and so on. "So you're actually listening to the systems of the planet," explains Prime. "The very first man-made radio signals were being manipulated by the earth's organic systems and you were getting that whole vocabulary of sounds that electronic music picked up on. I think in that way you could consider Gae as the first composer of electronic music." Anyone who has witnessed Prime in concert either solo, as part of the live electronic improvising group Morphogenesis, or in his trio with Jim O'Rourke and AMFT's Eddie Prevost, will have seen him seated at a table adorned with a plant. His bio-activity translator measures the fluctuating electrical field produced by living things and translates them into audible signals. So do plants have feelings, too?

"They certainly have very sensitive reactions to things. Whether you interpret that as feelings is up to you. You'll find that a plant will be giving out a certain rhythm and if someone new comes into the room or

lights up a cigarette, that rhythm may change. Which makes using them at gigs pretty problematic: you can get them sounding good at home and get them to the gig and they go completely hysterical."

1940s studies by Harold Burr using the bio-activity translator revealed that plants fall under the influence of the same electromagnetic force which controls the sunspot cycle (the 11 year cycle where black spots on the sun, visible through a telescope, appear and disappear). The same force also exerts an effect on patterns of shortwave reception. "It's a cosmic influence which affects every living thing on the planet, which we're not usually aware of," says Prime.

In our visually orientated society, if we can't see it (let alone hear it), then it doesn't exist. I ask Prime if he has an interest in ley lines, the patterns of energy that flow through the planet as particularly celebrated by agricultural societies.

"Definitely," he replies. "I've spent a lot of time seeking out megalithic sites and so on. I've made acoustic recordings there, but not electrical recordings as yet. In my work there's a lot of my travels and explorations of various places and my reactions to those places. And it isn't always sacred sites. There's a friend's flat that I was staying in where I discovered a wonderfully squeaky tap. I made some recordings of that which I built up in the studio and that's the section of the first piece on *Cellular Radar* that sounds like a load of wailing saxophones — it's actually someone's tap!"

Is there such a thing as Cellular Radar? "Well, who knows? Some people think that cells emit frequencies of vibration, and there's a whole theory that illness is what occurs when something disturbs the correct vibrational rate of your cells. Radionics claims to cure people by putting your cells back onto the right frequency. So I suppose there's some of that idea in there. Also cells appear to have some sort of sensory system in a way that we haven't quite unravelled yet."

PHIL ENGLAND *Cellular Radar* (MycoPhile) and *Morphogenesis's* *Charnai Music* (Paradigm) are out now (through These Records)

PHOTOS OF MICHAEL PRIME: LEE HILLS



Motorbass

House renovation

"House music? I turned up my nose at it when I first heard it in New York. But Drim from Paris forced me to listen. He said 'I want you to pay attention because we're going to play that kind of music back home in Paris.' Then I realised that I could adapt it by adding samples of funk to make it really funky, and that's how Motorbass was born." The speaker is Philippe Zdar, one half of the Paris-based duo along with his partner Etienne de Crecy. The music the two produce under the Motorbass banner, extended digital mantras subjected to the expansive rhythms of funk, Techno and HipHop, is a long way from the largely formulaic music being produced in New York and Chicago. "House music is less standardized in this country because HipHop is very strong here and it's had an enormous influence on all of us," suggests Zdar. This hasn't stopped the luxurious, atmospheric grooves of Motorbass's debut album *Pansoul* from finding favour with House — and non-House — aficionados everywhere. Not only that, its freshness and originality have given a further boost to a small but thriving French music scene already galvanised by the international success of MC Solaar and Daft Punk, names like Drim from Paris, Yellow Productions, Air, Eric Rug, Extra Lucid, as well as Zdar and de Crecy.

Zdar's musical career began long before he discovered House. He started as the drummer in a thrash-metal group, but it was his experiences as a sound engineer that expanded his knowledge of music production. He spent two years working with arch-conoclast Serge Gainsbourg. "Musically we were poles apart because Gainsbourg was a songwriter," he explains, "but I learnt a lot from his perseverance and commitment. I said to myself: if he can do it, then so can I."

Zdar went on to engineer MC Solaar's first two albums and has just finished working on the third, this time as co-producer. "I like having these two facets to my career: there's the more commercial side with my work for Solaar, and then there's Motorbass, where I do what I want."

Motorbass is only part of Zdar's story, however. Other projects include the instrumental HipHop of La Funk Mob, Cassius, a more dancefloor-friendly incarnation of La Funk Mob; La Chatte Rouge, a rap-orientated project with Etienne de Crecy, as well as productions with close friends and allies Daft Punk. The group he feels closest to is Air, despite their predilection for beatless music. "They're open to all kinds of influences, just as we are," he says.

While Europe's club culture media falls over itself to hail recent Paris productions such as de Crecy's *Super Discount* series of 10" singles, Zdar puts the music into perspective. "We're neither Tchaikovsky nor Bach, nor even John Coltrane," he says. "We're producers who create tunes and if they're good it's largely a matter of luck. There's a huge gap between musicians and songwriters and what we do. I'm a producer and I make sample-based music out of inspiration at not being a musician. But then musicians aren't usually any good

at making House music. They need to understand that it calls for a lot of restraint because it's a genre that was created by producers and DJs, by people who know nothing about music."

So Zdar looks beyond his fellow producers for inspiration. His heroes include Sly Stone and, inevitably, James Brown. "As far as I'm concerned James Brown invented House music, because he was the first musician to play hypnotic, repetitive music. He'd play the same thing for hours and people loved it."

Zdar is also aware that the innovations ushered in by the first wave of Chicago and New Jersey House producers have been superseded on the electronic dancefloor by the rhythmic intricacies of drum 'n' bass. "It's the music that opens up the most room for experiment at the present time," he suggests. "We're only breathing new life into old musical styles, whether House or HipHop. But drum 'n' bass is the music of the future." **RAMPA KHAZAM** *Pansoul is out now on Different Recordings (through Play It Again Sam)*



J Majik

Techstep tearaway

J Majik is part of a new wave of drum 'n' bass producers who are tearing the music apart with barely concealed joy. Like Photek and the Source Direct duo, Majik's not from the inner city but the satellite towns that surround the metropolis, in his case Watford. It's the hyperpulse of still growing youth that fuels the work of Majik and his contemporaries. There's music made without fear of failure, built with an energy capable of carrying drum 'n' bass into new territories. As he cautiously suggests, producers like Goldie and Dillinja are getting on a bit. Somebody has to take their place.

For one not long out of his teens, Majik has already achieved plenty with his recordings on Metalheadz. Reinforced and Mo' Wax. He began by translating typical teenage angst into a desire for music. "I started out wanting to be a DJ," he says. "I was buying records every week and going to the Paradise Club [in Islington, North London], but after about a year I wasn't getting anywhere and I got frustrated. I got a little spot at Spats in Oxford Street that opened at 4am but it was full of lunatics. Basically, at the time all the established DJs kept the work to themselves. The only thing left to do was to try and make tunes, which was a really intimidating thing to do. I knew nothing about the studio and it took ages to learn. But then I made 'Sex Million Ways To Die'."

This was the track that launched Majik's career in a spectacular way. Released around 1990 on Lemon 3's

Planet Earth imprint, it was a ballistic example of early hardcore with a break lifted from Carl Craig's "Bug In The Bassline."

"That tune opened a lot of doors to me. I was outside Black Market Records and Goldie was saying, 'Who done this tune?' I told him it was me and he was like, 'Where did you get those breaks, man?' We've been close ever since, he's the person I'm closest to in this whole scene."

This association led to Majik releases on Metalheadz such as "Your Sound" and "Final Approach", and production work on Goldie's forthcoming album, to be released in the summer. But Majik really comes to life on his own Infra Red label which he set up in 1992.

On *Slow Motion*, his forthcoming debut album for Infra Red, Majik leaves the niceties behind. His favourite trick is to increase the pressure in ever rising sheets of hardcore techstep before releasing it in long blasts of deflatory noise, a process akin to puncturing a cyst. The music shifts between the dark hardcore of "Stealth", with its bottom-end bass riffs and cyborg-dread, to the Ambient passages of "Chakra", a tune which continues drum 'n' bass's tacky obsession with New Ageism. So *Slow Motion* is a record that negotiates the current paths splitting the drum 'n' bass scene, suspending moods then cutting them with No U Turn-style noise terror, a jinx and yang effect that avoids both enervated Ambient Jungle-jazz and hardcore's industrial blackhole. "I can't listen to that hardcore stuff all night, it does my head in," he says. "I'd rather make music than noise." **JAKE BARNES**
Slow Motion is released this month on Infra Red (through Vinyl Distribution)

label lore

No: 006

CIMP



Address: Cadence Building, Redwood, New York, USA. Fax: 001 315 287 2660, e-mail: cimp@cadencebuilding.com

UK Distribution

Run by: CIMP Ltd. **Powered by:** Barry D. Rusch
Roster includes: Evan Parker, Robert Guy, Paul Lydon, Frank Love, Billy Bang, Herb Robertson, Vinny Golia, Luther Thomas, Sonny Simmons, Joe McPhee, Roswell Rudd, Paul Smoker and many others

Description: The spirit of 60s free jazz mingling with contemporary improvisation captured in real-time studio performances

Brief history: An idea that germinated and grew during the summer of 1995, CIMP's first five CDs were released the following March. The resulting energies and interest led to 25 titles by the end of 1996, 30 by March of 1997

Statement of intent: CIMP provides a hospitable and welcoming environment, encouraging improving artists to focus their energies and reach for the heights of their creative abilities. The artist is in the artist's control, the only limitations are the ones between their ears. CIMP recordings are all original productions from a broad spectrum of creative improvised music that will continually reward repeated and in-depth listening. CIMP CDs are digitally recorded live to two tracks, capturing the true sound of the music and the group with a vanishingly low noise-floor and tremendous dynamic range. CIMP does no compressing, homogenizing, EQ'ing, direct mixing, post-recording splicing, making, or electronic fiddling in any way. There is no fix-it-in-the-mix safety; either a take works or it doesn't. Performances are not cut and pasted together. Listeners hear exactly what was played.

Other activities: CIMP's sister label, Cadence, has been producing and releasing other peoples' tapes for almost 20 years, with close to 80 titles featuring such notable artists as Beaver Harris, Kalspanish Maurice McIntyre, JR Monterose, Marilyn Crispell, Bill Dixon, Borbetomagus, Matt Shipps, Rob Brown, Errol Parker, William Hooker and many more

Future plans: CIMP plans to continue producing this music and should release its 50th recording by the end of 1997

Choice cuts: Sonny Simmons — *Judgement Day*, Evan Parker — *The Redwood Session* (On 5 man) (re) Carl Essner



out on the left



GERD
This Touch Is Greater Than Moods
 (Universal Language) LP/CD

Two more albums in Mokka's first solo release since 1993's critically acclaimed "Rosh Balaia LP (WMM)". It features four new pieces and three remixed by Immersion. Immersion and G manyHagi Walker and most recently Hull's Park Recordings and Kirk Degouges Op Art imprint. This album is the distillation of two years' work and is destined to become a modern classic.

MALKA SPIGEL
Hide
 (Swm) CD only



Two more albums in Mokka's first solo release since 1993's critically acclaimed "Rosh Balaia LP (WMM)". It features four new pieces and three remixed by Immersion. Immersion and G manyHagi Walker and most recently Hull's Park Recordings and Kirk Degouges Op Art imprint. This album is the distillation of two years' work and is destined to become a modern classic.



SENSORY PRODUCTIONS
Bound To Please
 (Luxury Service) LP/CD

Two more albums in Mokka's first solo release since 1993's critically acclaimed "Rosh Balaia LP (WMM)". It features four new pieces and three remixed by Immersion. Immersion and G manyHagi Walker and most recently Hull's Park Recordings and Kirk Degouges Op Art imprint. This album is the distillation of two years' work and is destined to become a modern classic.

TO ROCOCO ROT
Veiculo
 (City Slang) LP/CD

Admiringly minimalist electronic from Germany. hypnotic, lush and lighter than original. "Post Future lounge music" - like Aphex Twin without the loud noise. / D "A highly satisfying debut album" B7D Jockey Slut



TRANS-AM
Surrender To The Night
 (City Slang) LP/CD

5 remixed. It was between anthemic nu-metal, keyboard soaked beats 'n' bass, and gorgeous New!-scape of speedily head melting proportions. The Wave. Not heavy, was no fuelled frenzy. NME. Produced by Toronto's John McKinley.



LOVE LEE
Confessions Of A Selector
 (Peace Feet) LP/CD

Two years ago Peace Feet released the groundbreaking "Turny Touch" EP by Love Lee which was popular right across the dance music spectrum, due in part to the inclusion of "Agan Son", a track that became a set staple for The Chemical Brothers and Goldcut. A year later came the equally massive "Ruffcut" and now true to form, 12 months have passed and Tim "Love" Lee drops his debut album - the soundtrack for a porn movie that's yet to be made.



We also distribute Blast First, Leaf, Pussyfoot, Rephlex and Warp releases, among many others. If you have a problem getting hold of any of these releases contact Chi-Keat Man on 0171 284 1155



demix



It's dark. Outside, intense gusts of wind are driving sheets of rain against the windows of the dimly lit loft which serves DJ Vadim as a studio. Inside, the conversation is ritual, thoughtful, and punctuated by eloquent silences which allow the external, elemental roar of the storm to become part of the texture of the exchanges. Later, when I play back the tape of the interview, its switchback narrative drift seems thoroughly — almost supernaturally — in keeping with the emergent, synthesized environments generated by Vadim's music.

On his most adventurous recordings — last year's *USSR Repertoire* (The Theory Of Vertically) album on Ninja Tune, and the recent *Revelations Of Wrath* EP on his own Jazz Fudge label (released under the name Andre Gurov) — Vadim has threaded his predominantly instrumental lo-beat HipHop with a lattice of environmental embellishments. Drones, groans, creaks and shivers permeate the clinical rhythms, while other, more identifiable sounds create points of entry for the listener. There are doorbells and door hinges, water droplets, telephone line crackle and distorted answering machine messages, birdsong, traffic, and radio interference — a panoply of noises wires Vadim's music inextricably to the outside world of endlessly compromised silence, making for a mournful, eloquent and integrated commentary on the halting, glacial beats. The slow tempos create pools of space, areas of time for atmospheres and images to take shape. As a producer, Vadim is a master of the hiatus.

The first track on *Revelations Of Wrath*, "Non Conformist", samples Raskin's invocation from "Shark Niggas" (on the Only Built 4 Cuban Linx album) — "Be original!" — and Vadim's music manages to transform this platitudinous urging into a genuine quest. At the same time, the quote roots Vadim firmly in the finest tradition of HipHop experimentation, a tradition which takes as much account of Double Dee & Steinski's scratch collages as it does the smooth production skills of Marly Marl and DJ Premier. Vadim is an intense and focused young man, and the discipline which is the backbone of his deliberate music also manifests itself in his religious beliefs and his training as a civil engineer. Blessed/cursed with stringent standards, he finds much of the music with which he is inevitably associated almost pathetically directionless. On the sleeve of *Revelations Of Wrath* he quotes from the Book Of Isaiah: "You will be forever hearing but never understanding, you will be ever seeing but never perceiving, for this people's heart has become calloused." The sentiment relates as much to the TriPhop pack as it does to unbelievers.

"The religious thing for me is very militant," he tells me. "You've got to live by the rules and employ discipline, and maybe that relates to the music — it's that straight railway track that you've got to follow. Most people don't have disciplined trains of thought. There are a lot of artists who don't know what the fuck's going on, everyone's copying each other and they don't know why they're making music. Yeah, there's lots of instrumental records around, that come out every week, and most of them are a pile of cack as far as I'm concerned, like someone's knocked them up in half an hour at home. What I'm trying to do is very much to use natural sounds like eating rocks or walking on gravel or playing tennis or opening a drawer, with crusty 7Ds rock record beats and really dark sounds, and sculpt it all together."

This mini-manifesto is the distillation of a lot of listening — his studio contains many unmythical piles of esoteric vinyl — and although Vadim sees himself primarily as working within the boundaries of HipHop, his inspirations often come from much farther afield.

“The religious thing for me is very militant. You’ve got to live by the rules and employ discipline, and maybe that relates to the music”

At one point in our conversation he brandishes the ring oscillator and theremin-laden sleeve of a Fifty Foot Hose album, later he gives to his decks to sample a beat from a Shirley Scott organ groove. The sounds that he plays his music: its unique character have been painstakingly gathered and filtered, some gleaned from his wanderings through South London accompanied only by a portable DAT machine, many more discovered during an epic continental record-buying trip. As Vadim remarks, "Just finding the sounds themselves is such an art." The dislocated fragments of Polish jazz or Swiss yodeling which Vadim infiltrates into his music don't come from a sample CD, anyway.

Unlike many sampling musicians, Vadim is aware that the art of sound collage has a lengthy history. His imagination is as populated by Luigi Russolo's Futurist sound machines and Pierre Schaeffer's spiced tape productions as it is by the HipHop productions of DJ Premier and The RZA. And as Vadim's music has progressed,

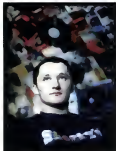
obvious homages to *musique concrète*, such as "Melodies in Hinge Creek" on *USSR Repertoire* (a track created from the sound of manipulated door hinges), have been replaced by a more integrated approach for which subtlety is the watchword.

"If you jumped a needle quickly across one of my records," he suggests, "you might think, well, nothing much happens, whereas

if you're listening to it, nothing much happens, but a hell of a lot happens. You just gotta see what's actually there. I'm not making music like The Average White Band, you know, it's very subtle, it's all about sound, finding original sound, and putting it together, taking it into the future."

"I want to make music now for 2010, or for the year 3000, like Dr Octagon. I love the way that composers like Russolo, Satie, [Pierre] Henry and Schaeffer totally detached themselves from their own time and the way other people made music, and focused completely on other things in order to make something for the future, something that wasn't around at the time. In a way, that's what I'm trying to do and hopefully I'll become more extreme, although Ninja Tune won't like to hear that."

Given that Ninja Tune artists such as Coldcut and Funky Porcini have recently removed Pierre Henry's 1963 electroacoustic funk monster *Messe Pour Le Temps Présent*, perhaps Vadim's pessimism on the front is unfounded. Polish in years to



come Vadim will be celebrated as spearheading a new hybrid of *musique concrète* and instrumental HipHop. He's certainly interested in unbing music with other areas of the arts, admiring Russolo's multimedia approach (writer, painter, composer) and playing with some unusual ideas.

"One thing that I want to do on my next album," he says, "is to collaborate with an artist and to try to make the music with the artist's hands. I could make a record with The RZA, say, and it might be really good, but it would be slightly predictable, more predictable than doing a track with an architect like Richard Rogers. I don't think that music in itself is separated from other forms, they're very connected as far as I can see." ... *Revelations Of Wrath* is out now on Jazz Fudge (through Parlophone)



nature boy

DJ Yadiim has a manifesto for galvanising the instrumental HipHop community with an infusion of influences from *musique concrète* to the Biblical prophets. Interview by Chris Sharp

"When I hear the word Ambient, I reach for my guitar," wrote Boba Kopf in *The Wire* 146, referring to the ability of musicians such as Neil Young and Keef Hawn to construct volatile landscapes of sound from the base material of electrified wood and steel. For over 15 years the New Zealand guitarist/composer Roy Montgomery has been intermittently recording music with a number of unsung rock groups, but two recent solo albums, *Temple IV* and *Scenes From The South Island*, reveal a similarly rare talent for turning the electric guitar into a sonic terraformer.

"It was probably not until I stopped making music during much of the 80s," Montgomery tells me, "and turned my attention more to watching and listening—to film, film music, classical music and instrumental music typified by ECM and the EG Editions Ambient material—that it really sank in that you could evoke place with sound."

Both *Temple IV* and *Scenes* are inspired by specific geographical locations: the former "describes" a night spent on the legendary Mayan temple in Tikal, Guatemala, the latter takes its inspiration from the mysterious, barren outcroppings that characterize the

south of New Zealand's two islands. It's an approach which suggests immediate parallels: Jon Hassell's ongoing mapping of the Fourth World, Thomas Koner's Arctic explorations, Brian Eno's *On Land*. Montgomery admits that while there are disparities between these initiatives and his own work, "the differences are probably more technical than conceptual."

Montgomery is not your average rock guitarist: he estimates that he has made only 30 live appearances in the last 17 years. Has such a different approach affected his work? "I am certain that it has preserved the ability to generate new works and to experiment in certain ways. As any of my collaborators will tell you, my view tends to be: why play live when you could be recording?"

Montgomery might have been making music since the early 80s, but he suggests that only now is he finding his own voice. "Although I grew up saturated in pop culture it has taken me some time to sort out my relationship with the 'rock' medium, and my own pretensions at creating art, hence the periods of silence." He is also painfully aware of how difficult it can be to eke out an existence as a creative musician. "I don't think I have been able to conceive of the 'music-as-career' option in the past 15 years; a year traveling the UK in 1982 I

spent much time with The Cure's Robert Smith, Mark E. Smith, The Bunnymen. I found that with the exception of The Cure, all were struggling to make ends meet purely as musicians. Any faint notions of a viable rock 'n' roll lifestyle were quickly extinguished."

Some of Montgomery's best music has resulted from his work with fellow New Zealander Chris Hespley in Dissolve, the duo's *That That Is Is* (Ned) album melds lyrical pastoralism to an expansive take on systems music. In the last year or so he has been making connections with bright lights from the UK underground, among them Flying Saucer Attack. "I wrote to [FSA's] Dave Pearce while I was in the US and warned him that if I made it to the UK I'd like to meet up for a drink. As it turned out, when I went to Bristol [in April 1995] to visit Dave I took my guitar with me as FSA were due to play one of their rare live performances and there was the suggestion that I might become an honorary member for that event, and that did indeed happen." Some of the music that arose out of that meeting can be heard on a recent and brilliant three-track EP, "Goodbye!" And "Goodbye?" *The Whole World*.

So Montgomery has now been pulled into post-rock's elliptical orbit. He suggests "focused eclecticism" as a

From basic materials, the reclusive New Zealand guitarist **Roy Montgomery** sculpts evocative audio landscapes inspired by mythic temples and antipodean terrain. Story by Simon Hopkins

terraformer

very reasonable definition of the post-rock aesthetic, and as if by way of example, tells me about his plans for a future cross-media performance piece called *Resolution Island*.

"It's about a refugee who lived in a remote part of the South Island of New Zealand at the turn of the last century and who spent his days relocating hundreds of endangered native birds only to see them wiped out by introduced predators. It is a non-naturalistic piece which relies heavily on sound and choreography."

Currently Montgomery records his solo work at home to four-track. Unlike the music of other New Zealand guitar mavericks such as Bruce Russell and Michael Morley, however, his work bears little evidence of lo-fi fetishism. Is it an approach born of necessity or something that was consciously chosen? "There is a partial aesthetic attraction and the rest is pragmatism," he replies. "I have not had the resources available for lavish recordings. I try to treat the four-track machine as a modest but 'real' recording facility. Other people hold the view of lo-fi equipment as the only legitimate technology, which I find equally tiresome. I would like the opportunity to test ideas in the hi-fi control room. There are Phil Spector's ghosts to be evoked, I fear..." *Temple IV* and *That That Is Is* are available on Kronik. *Scenes* is released by Drunken Fish. (The EP with FSA is on VHF [all through Cargo].)

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"When the listener and the player and the music are all one, then you've achieved something, and that's not an easy thing to get to," says the New York-based pianist/composer Myra Melford. "For improvisation to really function at its best, the listening and the playing have to be simultaneous. It's a sense of the three being one with no duality or no divisibility whatsoever, and in an ensemble setting it requires that every single player be in that same place at the same time, be in that flow of the music. And I definitely feel like any aspect of music is fair game, whether it's been heard before or hasn't been heard before."

There are two roads Melford takes towards this goal: meditation (both Zen and yoga) and forming a new group. The former grew from her studies with saxophonist Joseph Jarman, a Buddhist priest with whom she also studied Aikido. The latter comes after having used the rhythm section of bassist Lindsey

"He also taught me a lot about bringing a sense of humour to what I'm doing. That really broke down some of my habits and ways that I saw myself as a player. All of a sudden I found that very exciting and I wanted to find other players over here who are willing to approach my music in that way. I found that in [trumpeter] Dave Douglas, for sure. So the quintet really was a way to find players who are willing to use all kinds of references in their playing and who aren't going to be surprised if someone starts playing some reference to Ligeti or Lutoslawski or marching band music or whatever."

Where Melford's trio music used to sound like monolithic sculpture in a single material, *The Same River*, twice suggests collage.

"I'm not opposed to linear development, but I'm much more interested in simultaneity of events, or references to different things or layers of different things, and how to have those come across and work without being overly dense or too full of information to make sense to

a listener. I'm also interested in using more, like, cross-fades and dissolves, and bringing in certain kinds of information at sub-audible levels and then having that come up and be what's in the forefront while the other thing is receding. It's certainly easier to do that with five people than it is to do with three. But again, it's also the sensibilities of the players and the type of music that I'm writing, because I think the compositional material is changing certainly as well as the style of improvising."

Following her move to New York Melford paid her dues in the ensembles of Jarman, Larry Jenkins, Henry Threadgill, Dutch Morris: the cream of the New York post-jazz avant garde, in other words. (On another recent release, *The October Revolution*, she plays a stirring trio version of Morris's "The Death Of Danny Love.") Having had those experiences, the influence of other Chicago AACM guiding lights such as Muhal Richard Abrams, and her own interests stewing for a number of years, she has now achieved a breakthrough of sorts, artistically and perhaps commercially, now that she's on a new label, Gramavision, with more stable and widespread distribution.

"When I started becoming really serious as an improviser and as a composer," she says, "my improvising tendencies were much more in a sonic and textural and physical kind of realm in my approach to playing the piano, and the kind of music I was writing was much more about melody and harmony and grooves and extended harmonies and so on. And I'm still looking for ways to integrate those two." □ *The Same River*, twice is out now on Gramavision (through Rykodisc/Vital). *The October Revolution* is available on Evidence (through Harmonia Mundi).

New York pianist **Myra Melford** throws Zen meditation, cinematic jumpcuts and East European composition into her free-flowing jazz collage. Story by Steve Holtje

Journey to the one

Horne and drummer Reggie Nicholson on all her albums prior to her recent record with the new five-piece group, *The Same River*, twice.

"This new configuration provides me with another palette and another sensibility about improvising, which I was missing in the trio," she says.

Like most musicians who move through the mercurial, ad hoc world of improvisation, Melford, who was raised in Chicago but moved to New York in 1984, values the tensions that can arise out of unfamiliar performance situations. In 1994 she undertook a tour with that most unpredictable of improvisers, drummer Han Bennink.

"I was starting to feel a little restricted by this trio format," she says. "With Han, there was no preconception about what was going to happen, we would never decide beforehand what we were going to play. If something worked great one night, Han would refuse to play it the same way the next night.



Myra Melford (right) with *The Same River*, twice

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In 1971 four musicians entered a disused cinema outside Cologne and turned it into one of the most legendary of all recording spaces. The music they made there over the next seven years reverberates still. Rob Young journeys to Inner Space to meet the four members of **Can**

Can in Inner Space. Left to right:
Jaki Liebeck, Michael Korf,
Holger Czukay, Irmin Schmidt



W e are sitting in one corner of a giant instrument called Inner Space, the Can Studio in Weikersdorf, a hamlet half an hour's drive outside Cologne, Germany. Not the equally well-known Schloss Norvenich, the castle lent to the group in their early years by a rich, anonymous patron, but the disused cinema building which was Can's home between December 1971 and their disbanding in 1978. Everything currently in the official Can catalogue, from 1972's *Ege Bamyasa* onwards, was recorded here, and they tell me it's still very much as it was, the soundproofing mattresses which their manager Heidegard Schmidt (wife of keyboardist Irmin) bought from the army for 450 marks are still nailed to the walls and ceiling. "It just occurred to me recently," Michael Karoli is saying, "that all the time we were working here we were surrounded by wet dreams. Because all those mattresses on the wall — you can still see them in the corners — they came from the military. There are 1500 mattresses, three per person, three make one bed. So 500 people have been dreaming about sex on these mattresses for a long time. It must have inspired our music somehow."

The four instrumentalists of Can are gathering here, almost 30 years after first uniting under a common front. Irmin Schmidt arrives first, expansive and benign. Micky Karoli next, striding round the studio, plucking notes on the bass guitar that was left here by Rosko Gee, the ex-member of Traffic who joined Can at the end of 1976, and worrying because he has heard that the building might have to be sold. Jaki Liebeck comes third, he gazes idly at the draped sheets which a former girlfriend decorated with psychedelic paratroopers, jet fighters, clouds, embroidered flags, polygons, Egyptian and magical symbols. Finally the clowning figure of Holger Czukay bursts in, joking with *The Wire*'s photographer ("I have a lot to do with wires"), videoing the proceedings and consulting his wife U-She on his choice of hat. The group pose in front of four tower speakers which once served as their live PA, now ranged like sentinels at one end of the room along with Jaki's more exotic percussive items — gongs, clappers, a metal witch's hat — dangling on a frame in his former corner of the huge floor space.

But there's no dust here, and no cobwebbed memories, either. This is the first time all four members of the group have assembled here together since 1991, when they recorded a track, "Last Night Sleep", for Wim Wenders's flabby road movie *Until The End Of The World*. Arriving early in the morning to set up for the photo shoot, we are welcomed by studio owner Rene Triner, who engineered all Can recordings from 1973 onwards and now runs the studio commercially (he took it over from the group when they disbanded in 1978), although he says business could be better. This is difficult to believe: the studio interior is like no other that I've visited, there is an incredible, viscous silence hovering like some invisible putty waiting to be shaped by sonic vibrations. The ceiling is high, the floor is wood, and the mixing desk stands at one end, part of the room. A door at one side leads to a small garden, backing onto some incongruous allotments, the studio entrance still contains the old cinema ticket booth, with the 1970 prices for confectionery in place. It's a weird mixture of time capsule and functional, state of the art music workshop.

I s there any need to retell the story of Can: this amazing, fortuitous collective of musicians who fell together at the tail end of the 60s, burning to make something new out of the disciplines — modern composition, free jazz, pop music — that had in various ways failed them? This was, after all, an improvising collective which constructed a meta-musical model of social and artistic integration and organisation in

PHOTO: DEAN BELCHER

inner **space** *is the place*



Can now... and then

similar fashion to groups like AMM or Henry Cow, for whom every second of the music had to contain in microcosm the image of its creators and their mutual interaction, and which in turn, by an evolutionary process, expressed larger truths about the structure of the society that produced it, and so on up all the steps to the macrocosmic structure of the universe. Yet this was a group who could reach number one in the West German charts, with 1972's "Spoon." At a time when "rock" meant the bloated egos of Mick Jagger or Jim Morrison, Can gigs were the stuff of legend: spontaneous, evolutionary jams that could last seven or eight hours, with 20 minute drum machine or radio solos and circus performers thrown in for good measure. They didn't release albums so much as broadcast on vinyl from their studio: the tapes were constantly running, even when they thought they weren't (Holger Czukay saw to that). In fact, Tinner shows me a cupboard stacked floor to ceiling with all the remaining Revox tapes from the period, still in their boxes, waiting to be heard. This, as any Can fan will tell you, is marginally more exciting than finding the lost Ark of the Covenant in a garden shed.

Anyway, the story of events, such as they are, has been told with passion and enthusiasm by Julian Cope in *Knotrock* compiler, and Pascal Bussy and Andy Hall's *Can Book* (1989). If it's Stones/Beatles exhort terrible mythologies you want, then stick with your Philip Normans and your Albert Goldmans, because as Irmn Schmidt says, "These were eight years spent in this room. Our normal life when we were here in Cologne, we started working at two, three o'clock here, sometimes four o'clock, and then went away when other people went to work, at six o'clock in the morning. And we did that day after day, all year long, without any interruption, except to turn."

So it's not who did it, it's what they did: the Can story sits right there in the grooves they have left. "Can music was tape music," declares Karol. Witness the 20

"I was very interested in the cosmic harmonies. I spent long nights comparing the revolutions of Mars, trying to work out what chords they were making, but I never got anywhere."

minutes of "You Doo Right", an early jam that made it to vinyl in a version cut from two separate live performances. Likewise the awesome, monolithic groove of "Hallelujah", to my ears the most potent 18 minutes of music the group sprinkled up — again, achieved by numerous post-performance splittings. The title track on 1974's space-rock holy grail, *Future Days*, ends with a section of the track played at double speed, mixed dead in sync with the real-time rhythm, but the trickery sits so naturally, it's barely noticeable. "Hooshake", a perfect, thundering slab of pop, contains a masterful Schmidt synth solo anticipating the scuzzies and chirups of R202 while *Star Wars* was still a working brunch with George Lucas. Or again, the 20 minute sound narrative "Bei Ar", from the same album, perhaps the best example of Liebezott's astonishing, levitating percussion, chopping and threshing like a Chinook's rotor blades to keep the turner's body aloft.

"We took a very strong part in the editing and all these things," remembers Micky. In "Oh Yeah" (from *Tape Age*), we had made a rhythm tape, so we played the tape backwards and played on it, and Domo (Susuki) sang, and then we turned it back around, so the whole dub is going backwards. I think that was Jaki's idea. We did not make rock music in that sense; we rather made new music in the techniques of modern composers."

Except that, somewhere along the line, they made those dry, hermetic, academic experiments come alive. It was as if the introduction of rhythm and repetition — via the classic pairing of Liebezott and Czukay — woke up the ponderous soundscapes that were already being explored by Stockhausen and his circle ("If you didn't follow the rules, you were thrown out of the party," says Irmn. "Spontaneity was strictly verboten") and changed them with motion. "I wanted to make dance music, actually," says Micky. "And I still do. Of course, dance music can be a music where you lie on your back, and your brain tells dance."

You'll shortly be hearing a lot about Can. They're not releasing any new recordings of their own, but they have thrown their doors open to two CDs' worth of removers. Set in motion by Mute label boss Daniel Miller, and undertaken by 16

mixers in all including Brian Eno, Sonic Youth, A Guy Called Gerald, The Orb, UNKLE, Carl Craig, Westbam, Pete Shelley, Ar Liquid and Holger Hiler, the end results are warmly embraced by all four Can members. In a joke at the expense of Can punts, the group have titled the album *Sociologie*. This comes at a time when the urge to reconfigure has reached an all-time frenzy, what with Xenakis and Pierre Henry remix albums also due this year. Tear up your past and your idols, they seem to be urging. *Away* with sentimentality. Fling ink at the objects convention calls masterpieces. The freedom to reinvent is one of the last freedoms we have left. Move on, as we have.

Can are quick to pronounce themselves delighted with the new mixes. "They have done us great justice," says Michael Karol. "I stood there after dinner and listened to the tapes, and I danced the whole way through, from the beginning to the end I was on my feet."

"It's very nice to listen to our music, or elements of our music, through the ears of other people," says Irmn. Jaki Liebezott agrees. "Sometimes I think it's better than the original," he says. "It's the taste of today, my taste has changed. For that time maybe it was OK, but a lot of things have changed. The remixes are nice music. I can listen to I never listen to old Can records. I know everything. It's done, like a painter, he says, he never looks at his picture."

In 1968, Schmidt and Holger Czukay, I both sons of Stockhausen, and Jaki Liebezott, who had returned from several years playing free jazz in Spain, had all turned 30. Michael Karol, who was being taught guitar by Czukay, was 20. The airwaves were full of the blissed-out pop emanating from America's West Coast and

Swingin' London, the streets of Europe were erupting with violent protest; and the TV carried pictures of atrocities in Vietnam. Can promoted the Marshall McLuhanite approach to the global village, embodying it in the way they produced their music, displaying an openness to cultures while keeping an eyebrow cocked as if to remind themselves of their own barefaced cheek. Rather than celebrating entropy or plunging into the darkness at the heart of the century, they set an example of how to build for the future.

"If there is a sense to 'postmodern'," says Irmn Schmidt, "it means that there is this vast field of ruins of our culture of 5000 years. It's still here, but it's in ruins, and you just serve yourself. You know, in the 16th century, Rome was a vast field of antique ruins, and they built new houses with them — this is really not new." With an ongoing sequence of what they called "Ethnological Forgery Series" (EFS, some of which can be heard on the *Unlimited Edition* outtakes CD), they experimented playfully with non-rock instruments such as flutes, tables and bagpipes, making ludicrous attempts to play Bulgarian folk music or Daneland jazz. These are the pieces that Holger Czukay remembers with most affection. "You see, we couldn't play," he says. "Now, if a band can't play, if we had played rock 'n' roll it would be ridiculous, so what can we do? We can do as if we would be primitive native people from somewhere else, who are not able to play, but somehow being musical. And that was it. It was combined with a lot of humour, during the recording. Jaki, for example, took a clarinet. He mixed the mouthpiece of a clarinet together with a flute. He combined this together and played Fantastic! Jaki is actually very very good about that."



COURTESY OF CANAL+ / STEVE GRANITZ

The group retained an ironic awareness of these activities, their 'forgeries' mocked bogus notions of ethnic authenticity propagated by the music industry to prevent foreign musicians from taking full advantage of Western technologies and marketing possibilities. "It was just using the space of this globe, or doing something off our own path," says Irimin. "That's how you escape being a tourist in your own past." How far back did they try to reach, I ask. "Oh, far back until the beginning of mankind!" comes the reply. "Especially Jalo. He was always behind rhythms which the first man has drummed. Still he comes over nearer to that, and the strange thing is that the more he comes nearer to this, the more he is a machine — this is some philosophical theme to think long and deep about!"

Can wanted, purely and simply, to make themselves into a mechanism of release, to leave behind the earthbound ego, to generate ecstasy, to radiate the harmony of the universe. "I was very interested in the cosmic harmonies," remembers Michael Karoli with a trace of a smile. "I spent long nights comparing the revolutions of Mars, trying to work out what chords they were making — but I never actually got anywhere." The group's interviews would reveal interest in all kinds of arcane and emergent science — astrology, the I Ching, quantum physics — but these were strategies briefly employed and then abandoned. As Schmidt puts it, "We were visiting all these worlds without getting trapped." On occasion, they got there. "The most wonderful moments," recalls Irimin Schmidt, "were when I looked to my hands, and had one thought: listen and never interfere. I was



“Can has its own soul. It's like a man-made deity. Music was for us not a means of expressing anything, it was just applied mathematics.”

just one big ear, looking stunned to my fingers. I don't know what the hell they did. There are moments in 'Bel Air' like this, also on *Toyo Mogo*, 'Dizzy Dizzy' [from *Soon Over Babylon*] has that..."

"Can has its own soul," posts Karoli. "It's like a man-made deity in a funny way. I saw myself as a sort of maybe

computer, a sort of interface between my ears, between incoming sound and outgoing sound. Music was for us not a means of expressing anything, it was just applied mathematics."

"One of the very basics in music is repetition," says Irimin. "And one of the difficulties in new contemporary art was denying this physical fact that repetition is one of our basic needs. Everything starts with repetition, it's as if you want to force somebody to walk without repetition, and to breathe — and the heartbeat, yes. Our body is something which repeats in cycles, short and bigger ones, which superimpose. And all this is music: it is hypnotic, but it means energy, producing energy, definitely."

"The strongest parts with Can were when they didn't actually play," says Czukai. "That means, when they got played, by a sort of secret machine behind it, so? Then Can was really good. And that is when Can became an inhuman."

Can identify what the impetus to become a machine was? The answer is punctuated by a hysterical snigger. "I tell you what this is. This is the experience of a band which takes a lot of efforts to make good music, and they become brave men in doing so. But they become very lucky men, when they don't do so much about it, and just see that God plays, and band is directing!"

And what of their vocalists — Makolm Mooney, who had to leave the group before it killed him, and Damo Suzuki, the psychotic, soft-voiced Japanese elf? "I differentiate between the Can four and the [vocalists]," says Karoli, "because since they have left Can they have not taken part in the same development: that the four of us have all made simultaneously." That's not to say their contributions weren't crucial. For Holger, it was his first, errant vocalist Mooney who galvanized their rhythmic concept. "When he dropped in, he was sort of a driving locomotive. Rhythmically he was the pusher. We had to follow him, we couldn't stand behind him. That was the reason we got into this rock direction, more or less. And when he left [in 1969], we had some sort of rhythm experience. And that was the right time, when we met Damo, because he didn't have this attitude. He needed a group which was pushing him. So the timing for these two singers was perfect."

For Irimin, Mooney "was this spark which set fire to it, and all of a sudden it was a rock group. We had him for a short time, and then we had Damo. They both fit totally in it, because they were not really 'singers': they were instrumentalists who worked with their whole body, and they were singing sometimes as if they were 'loped.' Miming a great gapping maw, he says. "It was all of a kind of handle for the listener, or some kind of anchor where you can jump on and all of a sudden it's the opening, the mouth — it's the mouth of the group in every sense. It sucks the listener in."

The group never had a long-term singer, although all their records feature vocals, there's a sense that they needed such a wild card factor to prevent what they all call "becoming a hero of the instruments." So Holger began dropping in more of his invented electronics like his dictaphone, plus radios, telephones and found tapes, in an effort to induce some kind of wobble on their spinning axis. Check "Animal Waves" on 1977's *Sow Deep*, one of the better tracks from their critically undervalued late period. Czukai, having handed his bass over to Rosko Gee, is fading in tape loops of sung refrains, ethnic origin unknown, in a manner that would be second nature to

modern day production teams like Coldcut or Future Sound Of London.

While there's no serendipity about the old days forthcoming from any of the group members, they do convey some of the excitement of those thousands of hours spent in this stereo-lab. "In the beginning," says Holger Czukai, "that was for me a big, big adventure. I wasn't sure if I was really able to lead the technical process of being a mixer and a musician at the same time, and being responsible for the overall sound which goes straight on record." It was a time when, in isolated instances — Imer Space, Lee Perry's Black Ark, Kraftwerk's *Kling Klang*, Miles Davis over at Columbia Studios with Teo Macero — the distinctions between production and creation were being written over. Engineer René Tinner, who was in the room during that whole period, remembers it as his most intense experience with music. "With Can it was never routine," he says. "Every day you could have a calm sea and then you have a pounding ocean; all that, in the same day."

It wasn't all rosy. When I ask Irimin to describe the atmosphere in the studio in those days, he looks round the space with wide eyes before replying. "The atmosphere? It's a battleground! That's what it is. It's blood all over the fuckin' place, and I still see it!"

You were at war with each other? I ask.

"No, no. It was just a battle for the music. Everybody had the idea, and we were fighting like hell for it. And that's what makes the music so loaded, because even the gayest and happiest music, and the most ironic, was really the result of very often of fights for how it should be. When I say 'how it should be,' that means the real, right expression for what it was. So that every music you play, if you improve, comes out of something you want to say. And then you really go over what actually is what you want to say, and say it right, so that's why it stays, because the effort was to say it clearly, right and precisely. And that was a fucking battle!"

Later, separately, Karoli concurs with this. "Fighting between each other, very much. We only had fights about musical matters, never about money, or anything like that."

There was total trust on the personal level between the musicians, and a very hard fighting about the music. Also on stage, many of the violent parts were actually fights between the musicians, that were musically carried out."

Did they perhaps encourage these conflicts to arise, to give zest to the music?
"No," Karoli replies, "well, I didn't. This music was special in that way because it was made by five people simultaneously, and it was always made while it was being recorded. I don't think there is anything comparable—I have heard about Beeheart sneaking onstage before concerts and detuning the guitars and things, and that sounds like a thought that was very close to what we did, in a way."

Holger also remembers strife, and hints at the forces that contributed to the eventual break up of the group. "[Immin] is right about this as long as we keep fighting for the matter, it's fine. But at the moment when persons are involved in this struggle, and are crucified in such a way that they don't dare to take on the instrument, then I would say it is not only any more for the music. It is something else which comes on top of that, and that is not very creative. That happens with every band. Can is no exception."

Two reasons why Can had to close: progress and friction. In a complex fashion, the two were not unconnected. In 1975, having mastered everything so far directly onto two old Revox tape machines, the group bought a 16 track mixing desk. This allowed for more layers of sound, but the creative tension started gradually to slacken as individual parts could be analysed and criticised. "This was the beginning of the end, somehow," explains Holger. "[With two tracks] we all felt responsible for the final result, when you play, someone goes over the top and destroys it—I he was responsible for a very good recording that he has destroyed, so he was somehow prewarned. Everyone took great care for making everything as good as possible. But that changed with the multitrack machine. Now could be criticised "The guitar made the mistake." Or, "The bass was doing the mistake." And the effect of it was, that the bass player or the guitar player wanted now to do their recordings alone, because they didn't want to get criticised all the time and have someone making bad vibes. No, they wanted to have good vibes as well as everybody else, but suddenly they were alone. This is the beginning of the end of a community."

Immin doesn't quite agree that the technology reduced the creative struggle. "It didn't reduce anything, it just brought more confusion into the whole thing. I think technology brings other possibilities, but never more. It doesn't matter if you use a sampler or just one string lying on the branch. The possibilities are there from the first moment, because they are in us."

Czukay sums up: "I thought it was like a living organism. Can, it had a beginning, it had a youth, it had a time getting old, and a time to die. And out of it came all members of Can which are still creative and never became watch repairers, or something like that."

They certainly didn't, although you can imagine less appropriate careers. All four have remained active in music, occasionally contributing to each other's solo projects. Michael Karoli is presently clearing up the Can live tape archives ready for their first appearance on CD, planned for next year. He is also experimenting with predominantly acoustic instruments, guitar, violin, cello, double bass. "I don't know where I'm going, but I'm finding out how to play very strong rhythms without actually making the movement. Tightening the whole rhythm without the input of enormous power, just by letting it swing, letting it vibrate."

Jaki Liebezett is still extremely active on the Cologne music scene, as well as regularly drumming for Jah Wobble, and he made a brief appearance on Pluramon's 1995 LP *Pick-Up Canyon*, released on Mike Plateaux. With his trio Club Off Chaos he is refining his explorations of the binary structure of rhythm, which he obligingly drums out on the table top for me. "It's a very simple system I have found out. I could write it down in Morse code. A rhythm is similar to a scale, not in the vertical, but in the horizontal way." Tantalizingly, the night before we arrived in Cologne, he had appeared on stage with Domo Suzuki.

Holger Czukay is also making inroads into the flourishing Electronica scene in

Cologne; he has just returned from a tour of the States with *Air Liquide's* Dr Walker, during which the duo cut a live album for future release. He plays me some dense, fluid Techno tracks he has been working on, and also some Can remixes of his own, particularly a brilliant remake of "Vitamin C" over which he delivers a surreal monologue about shopping, accompanied by U-She and a backdrop of sound effects recorded in the street. An album of songs recorded by himself and U-She is also complete, and in need of a record company. "The electronic scene seems to be a mirror of the situation Can was in," he comments. He is plainly excited by Techno's free-for-all nature, its method of reducing identity to a sequence of codes and shifting nomenclature. "These people, they are not there in this music. They try to avoid singers. No humanity, nothing. To be unhuman, actually, which is a very good thing, because there is so much secret in the crystals. There is no reason to cry for humanity in music." He is also working with video, and has just discovered the Internet: his own, playfully disinformative site has just gone online at <http://www.czukay.de>.

Immin Schmidt has spent much of his time post-Can making film soundtracks, most of which were released in the three disc set *Film Musik* on Spoon in 1994. His 80s solo albums, such as *Toy Planet* and *Musk At Dusk*, display an individual taste on layering, looping, and tape-based methods of recording. He has no regrets about the demise of Can. "The light goes on, or you become mediocre. The way Can made music is not the way, it's just a very, very interesting way. And maybe the most intense experience I had in my life. But this doesn't mean that from now on, you've got it!"

He's currently composing what he calls "a pop opera" based on Mervyn Peake's

"Can was like a living organism: it had a beginning, it had a youth, it had a time getting old, and a time to die"

Gormenghast trilogy, which will combine a full orchestra with heavy electronic treatments and studio techniques. He wants to involve A Guy Called Gerald in the pre-production, and cast Kate Bush and David Bowie as principal singers in the final version, which is intended to be made as a film. "The orchestra in my sense is a phantom orchestra," he explains. "It is an aspect of phantom pain! It will be worked into the whole electronic, synthesized and sampled thing. I don't think them to play rhythms!" Peake's post-war Gothic fantasy tells of a gargantuan ruined castle, crumbling at its foundations, and held together by stringent and petty bureaucracies. Does he see this as paralleling the European *fin de siècle* situation? "It's an image of the world," he says, "or our European culture, as it is falling apart. What ethnologists call 'imago mundi'! You find all this dream of making a better world, like you find in communism, and you find all the terrorism and the horror which you find in Stalinism. It makes it like a lary tale, but it isn't. It has a kind of mythic dimension. Because myths are always things which used to be sung, which used to be included in a ritual which used to be danced. The creation of the world, if you want to re-enact it, you dance and sing it. I still can make a really rocking and grooving rhythm in it, because that is the way we express our myths at the moment."

And how should we remember Can? "Actually as one of the stones in the wheel," says Holger, erupting in another fit of mirth. "I don't want to say, make it collapse, but the machines are working too perfectly these days. The grit—yeah, right." □
Sacrilege is released on 5 May by MusicSpoon (through RTMUSIC). The Can Studio is available to musicians for hire: tel +49 225 479002, fax +49 225 46366. Coming next month: tracking Can's legacy in the current music scenes in Cologne and Düsseldorf.



OSCILLATING IN

Hollywood. Science Fiction. 1956. Canary yellow and bright red 3D lettering zooms forward: "FORBIDDEN PLANET." The background is space, Griffith Observatory-style dome space, deep blue dotted with milky swirls of stars. This is America's 3D era, when everything shot forth, penetrated deep, became form. From giant doughnuts and flying saucers on the roof of the local drive-thru, to Cinerama can-can girls' crotchets thrusting out of the screen and into your face.

But if objects and images must be big, bright and bold, how will they sound? As *Forbidden Planet's* credits roll across the screen against a vast vacuum of night, all sound reverberates in echoing bleeps and tubular squawks. Sound, of course, does not operate in airless outer space as it does within earth's atmosphere. In space no one can hear you reverb. But this is Hollywood. Science Fiction. 1956.

Remmi Gassman's and Oskar Sala's wholly electronic score for Fred McLeod Wilcox's *Forbidden Planet* is a landmark soundtrack for many reasons. Apart from uncomfortably networking a transplanted European avant garde with the emigre European executives running Hollywood at the time, the film signposts the clumsy audio-visual fusion of 'electronics' with 'sci-fi' which persists today. In the 90s, outer space still sounds downright weird and outwardly electronic.

Forbidden Planet's electronics may sound corny, but its rarity as a totally electronic film score secures it historical savvy in an epoch of film music still bent by a 19th century aesthetic. Cinema has pompously espoused as '20th century art form' shock since its inception, yet an ever-widening gramophone speaker remains impeded through the works of Franz List, Richard Wagner, Alex Korngold and John Williams. The sound of the 19th century now belows from their bowels in Dolby Digital Stereo.

This is symptomatic of the crisis that persists when the arts and the sciences meet: new technologies appear to

the Big Bang. Reverb is the ultimate sensation of — literally — sound occurring outside of itself, of sound leaving a sonic trace of its absence. Psychoacoustically, reverb provides us with an out-of-body experience: we can aurally separate what we hear from the space in which it occurs. When the 20th century really kicks in — typically, when World War 2 assemblies and unleashes a myriad of accelerating destructive technologies — reverb is rediscovered as an 'electroacoustic' feature of recorded sound. When Pierre Henry and Pierre Schaeffer started reversing magnetic tape in 1947 they heard reverberation precede the event which triggered it. Simultaneously trippy, corny and profound, this sensation has propelled the design lineage of reverb units, from chamber resonance to spring tension to tape loop to real-time sample. In other words, reverb was made consciously apparent only after it was reversed and denaturalized.

Back to the film. *Reverb* is heavily employed in *Forbidden Planet* (and all ensuing 'spacey' film scores and sound designs), firstly to invoke the expansive opening of interplanetary frontiers, and secondly to evoke an imposing sense of size and space. At least 15 centuries of European church architecture used reverb to conjure up (in separate epochs) social amorphousness, individual erasure, thundering scale and omnipotent power. Sci-fi moves have followed suit with their own brand of technological mysticism and god-leaning morality. *Forbidden Planet* is thus a wonderful sign of its time: archly spooky, frighteningly empty and electronically baroque.

The film's production design proposes that the planet's deserts are remnants of oceanic regions, hence the film looks like an empty fish tank cluttered with hardened corallular and spongelonic formations. And just as the music score emphasises reverb where there cannot be any, 'bubbly' sounds percolate incessantly, overlaying an

In the first of a series of articles on the **secret history of film music**, Philip electronic music and B-movie sci-fi in *Forbidden Planet*, *Barbarella* and *The*

surge forward while incongruously wiring lyrical over decidedly older aesthetic concepts. Marshall McLuhan referred to it as diving into the future while looking in the rear-view mirror. Watching films while hearing Sibelius or Strauss can have a similar effect. *Forbidden Planet's* musically naively yet fortuitously underscores this cultural conundrum by proposing that the new frontier of space should usher in a new aesthetic dimension. The pre-war avant garde recognised this only too well, but cinema is yet to holistically perceive it — especially with regard to music and sound.

Back to reverb. Reverberation has been possibly the most sensual and tactile aspect of acoustic phenomena for most cultures since

incongruous underwater presence on a barren visual terrain. Of course, sounds heard underwater do not carry the full-frequency detail with which film music and sound portray aquatic conditions and sensations. In a bizarre match of wacky logic, the out-of-body experiences of reverb-in-space and aqueous/on-land complement each other perfectly. The acoustics are unreal, the sound is watertight, and the symbolism is sound.

The post-war space race introduced an array of similarly illogical, crazed and charming sono-musical icons: the arrhythmic, echo-laden twang of rockabilly singers yodeling about atomic power, the pseudo-sophisticated savouring of hi-fidelity jet engine sound effects in the lounge room, the joy of bedding the dial on portable shortwave radios, the cosmic and orgasmic symphonies of theremins, oscillators and vibraphones on record and in the cinema. In the 90s a prevailing trash aesthetic reduces much of this iconography's complexity to 'exotic', 'Easy Listening' and so on, but this does not preclude music born of the space age from embodying cultural and artistic depth.

Listen to Bernard Herrmann's use of theremin with orchestra for Robert Wise's *The Day The Earth Shook Itself* (1951). On one level Herrmann is guilty of again branding electronics with outer space weirdness, but he incorporates the theremin's ethereal song with traditional orchestration so as to blend textures of familiarity and strangeness in an alien setting. His theremin motifs symbolise the extraterrestrial energy that powers Klaatu's spaceship and his robot Gort. Through the music we hear the sound of that energy — an indication of Herrmann's astute understanding of the



Jane Fonda in *Barbarella*

OUTER

SPACE

potential of electronics when combined with acoustic, earth-bound instruments. A key figure in 20th century film scoring, Herrmann always knew the psychological purpose behind any 'mood' he generated through his compositions and instrumentation. Herrmann returned to electronics over two decades later for one of his final scores, Larry Cohen's *It's Alive* (1974). The score boasts some freaky analogue synth strings which wreck havoc with the orchestra's warbling and surges. The 'ugly' synthesizers symbolise the hideous mutant baby at the centre of the film, as out of place in hyper-normal Los Angeles as a voltage-controlled filter in *Little House On The Prairie*.

Electronica in the 50s meant outer space. In the 60s it symbolised inner space — the erogenous body. The most artistically cheesy but gorgeously hedonistic example of this is Roger Vadim's *Bartorella* (1968). Milanese design meets Parisian Electronica meets London fashion meets Hollywood stars. Every design crevice of the film is moist with camp, imbuing it with a timeless hipness. Effectively, the score by The Bob Crew Generation Orchestra (mixed with much uncredited electronic atmospherics) is Burt Bacharach and Michel Legrand 'soo-gasing' in outer space, combining erotica with Electronica, Francophilie with intoxicia. The new-era aural cheese of The Bob Crew Generation Orchestra combines, bluntly but beautifully, the aquatic tummy rumbles of *Forbidden Planet* with suburban California swinger jazz Muzak, all set to the widescreen landscape of Jane Fonda's navel *Bartorella* — born from a comic strip and made flesh by the genes of the Fonda family — emphasises the critical grey areas that arise when the avant garde and pop culture are cauterized in the creation of a film soundtrack. Artistic purity may be nullified, but transcultural germs spread like a glorious musical plague.

The influence of this meld can be heard in countless late 60s and early 70s Easy Listening albums in which the latent/repressed sexuality of white jazz is massaged and

Brophy hails the erotic union of cheesey *Day The Earth Stood Still*

caplaid by viscous, anti-gravitational synth-tones. The effect is one of a cerebral and physical weightlessness, urging one to go with the flow, intake now-generation aphrodisiacs and swing with the suburban set. 'Revolutionary' sexuality seemed to require an audio-visual copulation between electronics and erotics. Spacey, sexy synths and pseudo-theremin glides appear in Curtis Harrington's *Queen Of Blood* (66, score by Leonard Morand), Roger Corman's *The Trip* (67, music by An American Band), Otto Preminger's *Skidoo* (68, score by Harry Nilsson), *Alice In Acid Land* (orca 69, uncredited Muzak tracks), Russ Meyer's *Beyond The Valley Of The Dolls* (70, score by Stu Phillips), Nicholas Roeg's *Performance* (71, music supervised by Jack Nitzsche), Michael Crichton's *Westworld* (73, score by Fred Karlin), and many more.

Across a period of 30 years synthesizers in film soundtracks had shifted from 50s space age utopia through 60s sexual cornucopia to 70s erotic suburbia. Perhaps this is why only now can the retro-concept of 'space age bachelor pad muzak' be so obviously pleasurable. Yet while ancient synthesizers have attained the so-square-they're-cool status in much current postrock/dance music, the technical and formal balance between digital construction and analogue Electronica since the 70s has affected and influenced film scores and sound design profoundly. And it is within this terrain that synthesizers are no longer weird. They become perversely futuristic, timbrally pornographic and radically dimensional. Coming next month: *Tangerine Dream's Star Wars* and *Star Trek*, *Blade Runner*, *Howard Shore's Videodrome*, *Walter Carlos's A Clockwork Orange* and *Wendy Carlos's Tron*.





grass

Refining the connections between Jamaican dub,
Detroit Techno and UK rave at

“All the things we like come from the ghetto. Afrika Bambaataa, the Detroit Techno guys and King Tubby,” says Jamie Bismire, reconciling the electro, techno and dub influences that are absorbed into the music of his group Bandulu. “When Tubby first got his studio together he proved that you could do everything, right down to cutting records, on a grass roots level.” This is another aspect of the Bandulu methodology: a self-contained, cottage-industry approach to the music-making process (although they have yet to obtain their own vinyl pressing plant).

The Bandulu mod describes a strange triangle, one side cutting through the industrial north of the USA, the other coming up through Waterhouse, Kingston, the apex located in a small studio in one of the less fashionable areas of North London. This is where the Bandulu trio of Bismire, John O’Connell and MC Lucien Thompson have spent much of the last five, six years, largely ignoring the shifting sands of clubland fashion to hone and define a fusion of eerie roots reggae and Utilitarian Techno which is all their own.

“You can’t keep music stuck to one thing in Detroit or Chicago,” says Bismire talking about the geographic imperatives that have impacted on the basic House/Techno model over the last ten years. “It’s good that the Italians got on to it and made wicked, tacky House tunes, and the Germans made mad industrial stuff, and that people in London got on to it and made Jungle. Equally, we’ve got our own take on it all.”

roots revival

science, **Bandulu** are machine-age minimalists with a human touch. Interview by Mike Shallcross

The Bandulu church is a broad one, straddling three labels and a number of offshoot projects. A tour scheduled for the spring will further unite the trio’s interests, bringing together the old school club mixing skills of Jah Shaka with sets from such rising stars of ‘techstep’ drum ‘n’ bass as DJ Pulse, as well as live performances from Bandulu themselves.

Bandulu emerged in 1992 as the focal point of Creation Records’ experimental dance offshoot Infonet. At the time Techno’s post-rave creative regeneration was led by productions such as Underground Resistance’s “Death Star” and “Substance Abuse” from Richie Hawtin’s RUSE project, which married skeletal Detroit rhythms to innovative adaptations of the familiar Acid sound of the Roland TB-303.

Bandulu’s early work, typified by the 1992 Guidance album and the tracks they contributed to the 1993 Infonet compilation *Beyond The Machines*, stands apart from these initiatives, pursuing a less minimal approach to the productions, incorporating the kind of melancholy, synthesized atmospheres and melodies that were beginning to be heard on contemporaneous tracks by Higher Intelligence Agency, B12, The Black Dog, the class of ‘intelligent’ Techno.

“When we started to make Techno you were told you needed a TR-909 and a TB-303 otherwise it wasn’t Techno,” explains John O’Connell, whose reserved manner serves as a counterweight to the more effusive Bismire. “We could have made tunes like that, but it was more pleasing for us to take inspiration from other music.”

Infonet released tracks by such luminaries as Detroit’s Eddie “Flashin” Fowlkes and Tom Barnett, an early Derrick May collaborator, as well as the moody Ambient club of Andrea Parker, but it was left mainly to projects centred around the trio to supply the label with regular output. This was the primary and pragmatic motivation behind their adoption of working pseudonyms, the first being Thunderground.

“Right at the start we made a load of tunes and decided it was just right to divide them up like that, some as Thunderground and others as Bandulu,” says Bismire. “Besides, Infonet was just starting and it was good to have two acts on the label.”

The Thunderground alias appears to be long gone now, supplanted by other projects

such as Bismire’s Space DJz collaboration with Ben Long, which has spawned releases on the Some and NovaMute labels. Their tough metallic grooves have proved popular with DJs, but Bismire seems more animated by other, lower profile Bandulu operations. “Space DJz is a lot more regular than most Bandulu material, but it’s good to make tunes with other people and to go through the process of sharing your own ideas and being receptive to other people’s ideas.”

Another experiment was a Latin freestyle palette released under the name DJ Escobar. “Sometimes a tune comes out differently,” says Bismire. “We felt like we couldn’t put out a Spanish guitar tune as Bandulu, so we released it under the name Escobar. You can’t put all your ideas under one name because it confuses people.”

There’s a tradition here of sorts: the flexibility of digital music technology, and the facility of producers from Larry Heard to Carl Craig (or in an earlier, parallel epoch, Lee Perry and Keith Hudson) to manipulate binary code into contrasting musical environments, rubbing up against the demands of the dance music industry for musicians to deliver identifiable bundles of product, and the intransigent expectations of the fan-base. Hence the aliases that proliferate in dance culture like so many obfuscating masks.

“All these pseudonyms are like releases for us,” says Bismire. “When I’m at home mixing up a couple of tunes I can get an idea which doesn’t fit exactly with Bandulu. This way we can make other stuff, put it out and enjoy it.”

At the beginning of the 90s, while Richie Hawtin was refining his knowledge of computer science and Richard James was deconstructing and reassembling various pieces of electronic equipment, Jamie Bismire’s musical initiation was playing the drums and jamming along with his musician father (as Koh Tao, they recorded the closing track on *Beyond The Machines*, a curious, elastic guitar-manta titled “Pom Mi Ruh”). Meanwhile, John O’Connell was absorbing the record collections of his three older brothers. Music was perceived as a social activity rather than a series of intellectual problems to be solved in isolation. “Yeah, I never really thought about it like that, but I guess it was,” says Bismire.

The extension of this idea is the importance which the trio put on their live appearances. For many, the idea of ‘live’ dance music still equates to the spectacle of a couple of chancers bouncing around behind unplugged technology, performing no task more onerous than pressing the ‘play’ button on a DAT machine. The New York producer Joey Beltram, whose 1991 singles “Mentasm” and “Energy Flash” have been so influential on the current wave of techstep drum ‘n’ bass, insists that DJing is the optimum format for the live presentation of his music. The performance element has also been refined, most notably by Underground Resistance affiliate Jeff Mills, who plays breathtaking sets using up to four decks augmented with beats from a TR-909. Bismire’s own DJ work has taken him as far afield as Japan, but he prefers the “band feeling” that he gets from playing with Bandulu.

“You can get such a good feeling from playing live,” he says. “It can be difficult to get that sort of emotion from studio music, but when you take it live you get that old style feeling of oneness, which you can take back into making more music.”

Bandulu’s live sound involves controlling the sequences generated from their keyboards and drum machines through an on-stage mixing desk. This method of performance, mirroring The Pet Shop Boys’ notion of “machines playing live”, is not without its hazards. For one show in Scotland, a crucial computer disc was left behind in London. A close friend jumped on a plane and got the disc to the group with minutes to spare. During another performance at Brixton Academy, the group’s bass module malfunctioned mid-set. “We adjusted the frequencies and really

PHOTO: THE REVUE

worked the drums, chopping up all the breaks," says O'Connell.

These are not the sort of variables that can be legislated for by packing spare guitar strings, but O'Connell believes the methodology is vital in order to give the music an extra dimension. "Sonically the music is so much more vibrant for being generated by live pieces of equipment, rather than just being a piece of vinyl going through a master," he says. "You can really get inside the tracks and play with them, rather than just EQing the top or bottom of the tune."

In the last few months Bandulu have been quietly issuing music on two new labels: Ground and Foundation Sound Works. "Foundation's stuff is done with breaks and Ground stuff is done by basslines, but I think there is a real warmth to both projects," says Bosmere.

Foundation Sound Works' first three releases have been 12" double-packs of heavily percussive instrumental machine music. The tracks have been billed as "DJ tools": they are fiendishly well-produced, expansive enough to work at low volume on a home hi-fi, but play them loud and there is enough low end to immerse a large club sound system. "We labelled them DJ tools to encourage DJs to buy them because we wanted to put out Bandulu tunes that were easily playable in a club but which could be quite experimental at the same time," explains Bosmere.

Released with almost no publicity, the packages contain some of the trio's best work. Tracks such as "Platonic Rides", which works up a functional House groove then envelops it in reverb, and the twilight-zoned "Black Mass", are ambiguous enough to keep them out of the record boxes of many a jolting DJ. "We did 'Black Mass' because we were thinking that if 1000 years ago people did in a stone circle what they do at a rave it would have been called a black mass. It's about a need to let go and express a different side of yourself."

Ground's first release, the Ground Zero EP, is pure adrenalin Techno. Yet there is a subtle twist within the needling, high-pitched electronic riffs and ringing hi-hats which leap out of the mix. "In Ground I stuck to certain rules: the format is there, it's Techno, but the sequencing and the notation is quite abstract," says Bosmere. The EP's labels and run-out grooves contain philosophical digressions on the nature of numbers. "Ground is something I thought about for over a year," he continues. "I had the idea of the sound in my mind's eye, but I had to wait for the tunes to actually come to me."

The group believe that part of the power of the labels will be their consistency and clear direction. "Infonet was an open label, we weren't confined to one thing," says Bosmere. "Whereas Foundation and Ground are far more direct."

In 1995 Infonet, in John's words, became "dormant" when label boss Chris Abbott left to concentrate on other projects. The trio were left to assemble tracks for an LP which they didn't have the resources to promote. The solution was securing a deal with Warner's subsidiary Blanco Y Negro. In 1996 the label released the Cornerstone

LP, a brilliant, diffuse record which reconciled the oceanic reverb of "Deep Sea Angler" and the Jeff Mills-style drum assault of "Weak Heart".

The early spirit of experimentation had been modified into a more confident style, ironically just at the time when most conventional wisdom insisted that the logical end of fusing roots and Techno influences was to be found in the hypercharged polyrhythms of Jungle. Despite experimenting with breakbeats on "Yard Style", a track on 1995's excellent Infonet compilation *Soundstate*, Bandulu's take on drum 'n' bass is

informed by an aficionado's understanding of the roots aesthetic.

"Roots music is the speed of the music we do from 120-145 bpm, if you're going any faster than that it turns into ska," says O'Connell. "Jungle's beat is about 160 bpm which is the same speed as ragga. Jungle is nothing to do with roots music, it's more dancehall."

Due to the overuse of the word 'dub' in dance music, Bandulu tend to shy away from using it. Many commercial tracks are backed with a dub, usually just one or two elements extracted from the original version to aid DJ mixing. "Everyone and their mum can do a dub," says O'Connell. "Our music isn't just about dub, it's deeper than that. We're more about roots music." But Bandulu's working methods have been profoundly influenced by the hands-on approach of dub, and the idea of using the studio as an instrument in itself rather than a simple recording medium.

"Dub was a person expressing himself through the mixing desk,

using it to form different sounds and different tones. That's how we see the equipment we try to put as much of our own personality into the machinery by manipulating it constantly," explains Jarne. He stresses his dislike for the computer-controlled mixes of automated boards. "Automated boards are great if you're doing a 4D piece string orchestra, but if you're doing Techno you need all the sounds available to manipulate at any time. You need that control over them to get the human element. Computers, drum machines and keyboards can be very robotic, and you need to work to imprint a lot of your personality on it."

"We manipulate the machinery constantly. Computers, drum machines and keyboards can be very robotic. You need to work to imprint a lot of your personality on it"

Five years down the line and Bandulu are motoring forward with renewed energy. There is talk of setting up a new label, Firm, which will feature Infonet-style releases from a loose "firm" of friends and family, and there are enough tracks in the offing to take Foundation up to its fifth release, with Ground not far behind. From the point of view of Foundation at least, this kind of long-term thinking underlines the traditional perception of the DJ tool mirroring current club trends or being custom made for a DJ to mix with a particular popular anthem. But the trio seem to care little about dubland's zeitgeist. Bosmere claims he is more likely to be inspired by hearing a different element within a record he has had for ten years than by any "cutting-edge" dance release. I put it to him that future releases from Foundation may find them out of step with dancefloor trends. "That's great," he responds. "To move things out of context in that way can only be healthy." □ Ground and Foundation Sound Works releases are distributed through Vocal.



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invisible jukebox

Jah Wobble Tested by Mike Barnes

Born John Wardle in London's East End, Jah Wobble got his more exotic name when a drunk and incoherent Sid Vicious attempted to introduce him to a friend. As one of the gang who hung around Sex, Malcolm McLaren's shop on London's Kings Road, in 1975/6, Wobble might have joined The Sex Pistols alongside his friend John Lydon, but he was, by his own admission, too much of a job. When The Pistols split up in 1978 he joined Lydon's new group, Public Image Ltd. In the two years that he was a member of the group Wobble formulated his distinctive booming dub-influenced bass style.

While he was a still a member of PIL, Wobble had released two solo singles, one a collaboration with film maker Don Letts. After he left the group in 1980 he worked on projects with Carl's Holger Czukay and Jakko Jakszyk and, later, U2's The Edge, released a solo album, *The Legend Lives On*. John Wobble in 'Betrayal', and formed a group, The Human Condition. When the group split up in the early 80s Wobble worked for a time with keyboard player Ollie Martland before dropping out of music altogether, first driving a minicab, then working for London Underground. An increasing predilection for spirituality, an awareness of the "eternal rhythms" in his head and an exposure to North African and Middle Eastern music caused Wobble to rethink. He made a surprisingly potent return with The Invaders Of The Heart in the late 80s, the group's music skating neatly into a dance-fixated scene with the "Bomba 12" in 1990.

A hit single with Sinead O'Connor, 91's "Visions Of You" (from the album *Rising Above Bedlam*), raised Wobble's profile, and his ever burgeoning taste for eclecticism found him collaborating with a diverse cast of musicians on the subsequent *Without Judgement*, *Take Me To God* and *Heaven And Earth* albums. These included Natarsha Atlas, Pharos Sanders, Baebe Maal, Gavin Friday, Nayma Adhar and Nicky Skopelies. In 1995 Wobble collaborated with Brian Eno on the *Spinner* album.

Wobble has recently been moving into fresh territory, composing the orchestral *Concerto For Chinese Harp And Orchestra*, which was premiered by The Liverpool Philharmonic in November 96 with Wobble's partner Zi Lan Luo appearing as the soloist, and he is currently working on a requiem mass. Meanwhile, his last album, *The Inspiration Of William Blake*, and the forthcoming *The Celtic Poets*, highlight his increasing interest in spoken word projects.

The jukebox took place in Wobble's East London home.

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of...



THE O'JAYS

"When The World's At Peace" from *Black Stoppers* (Philadelphia International)

Sounds a bit New Orleans. Allen Toussaint? I'm hearing someone who has checked out a lot of music from the past. It could even be from the past, renamed, regular R&B thing. Who is it?

It's actually an original item. It's The O'Jays, from 1972.

Oh right, so it's the authentic thing. I used to check all their stuff out. The O'Jays — that's fine by me. Sounds good. Not the best thing I've heard them do.

Were you influenced by Philly soul?

Yeah, yeah, the sound of Philly MFSB Orchestra, "I Love Music," "Black Stoppers," all those old tracks. They had good bass playing, and it was one of the first times you could distinctly hear the bassline in American music; the bassline was an absolute entity in its own right. There was a lot of good soul in that mid-'70s time. The sound of Philly directly influenced me with how chords can make an atmosphere, with the strings and stuff. Lots of suspended chords, that real high stuff, which implies a sort of tension. I'd say more than inspiration, that was a direct influence. It was so simple bassline, sustained chords and all that.

I would never have thought that was The O'Jays. It was chunky sounding and Philly's generally smooth. When you have a real smooth thing happening with wonderful harmonies and stuff, it elevates your spirit, takes you closer to God. Funny enough, in that way a really smooth Philly track would affect me as much as a Renaissance tune, polyphony and voices swelling. The real masterful thing is to have that smoothness and have a groove there at the same time. What I liked about The O'Jays was you had a lot of congas up in the mix. That's why I always had congas for years, because of Philly. I thought it was amazing.



ARVO PÄRT

Contra in Memory Of Benjamin Britten (ECM)

[Immediately] Ooh, fucier! hell, I like that. [The Jukebox] has started off better than I thought. I thought there'd be a load of

proppy pop music, but you've brought old man's music. Well done!

[Referring to the track] Somebody's been listening to Shostakovich, with the strings and the use of the bell, so he's been listening to *Sixty-Four* or something. But deep maybe that's an unfair thing to say, because deep is deep. It would be nice for it to develop a bit more. I like it when you're not aware of the sequence starting. You listen to Gorecki's [Symphony] Number Three, I love that stuff, it never stops. It's not [Wobble hits the arm of his chair] 'sequence starting.' It's wonderful writing, very mature and understated.

Don't tell us, let's have a guess who it is... Play us the track after [ie. Finland]. European? British or central Europe? Hungarian-ish? Czech? Polish? Yugoslavian? It's not Arvo Pärt is it? I've heard a couple of bits by this

guy before and the geezer's a fantastic composer, as are Taverner and Gorecki. 20th century classical music brings as many tears to my eyes as anything from the 19th or the 18th century. It's the business. This stuff, I love it, pants such a beautiful picture. This shivers, the shiver test. It's doing that. I thought he was Hungarian.

He's from Estonia.

Oh, right. We're doing a lot of classical now, it's all that we're doing. I'll give you a tape [of the requiem]. It's not a thousand miles from this, it's a definite style. When did you start composing in a 'classical' style?

I always have fairly big bands, and when you've got over five players you're going to get into arrangement territory. Then you're dealing with six and seven, then you're building it up — you get the horn player while he's there to do a little counter part. You chance your arm with arrangements and surprise yourself how good they sound and develop your own style. So the stuff becomes more orchestrated and then it lends itself naturally into writing with a very orchestrated feel to begin with, rather than orchestrating afterwards. Then to and behold, suddenly you're sitting down and writing parts for 70, 80 people, suddenly you're walking like that [Wobble imitates balancing on a tightrope]. I've got a [compositional] style that's grown naturally from the music I've played over the years, but it's also very 20th century.

I was just wondering as you were talking if you ever had aspirations to do orchestral work when you were with P.M. I would guess not.

Not in a million years did I think that. No way. That would have been the same odds as becoming a Tornado pilot.

SLY & THE REVOLUTIONARIES

"Cocaine" from *Black Ash Dub* (Trojan)

Right, give us a clue. First of all, is it a straightforward dub album? Versions from vocal cuts? I'm hearing it's old style. I'm hearing right doggy dub space echo, which I love, so that's a very old technology. But the quality of the recording is very good, the separation and everything, which would suggest it's fairly contemporary, or a remix of old '70s stuff, because it sounds very clean to me.

It's Sly & The Revolutionaries from the late '70s.

You got certain trademarks with reggae. We like Lee Perry's stuff. You'd hear phased reverb, which we noticed some of the rave groups are using these days, so you get that phasing that kind of goes round in a circle. You'd notice certain trademarks in the arrangement. This one, I don't know what studio it would be out of. I. China Smith on guitar?

It was recorded at Channel One.

[Wobble looks at the album sleeve] Sly [Dunbar]! So it's Robbie Shakespeare [on bass]? All I can hear is it's the classic '70s sound. It's got that rounded feel, so I was thinking it's probably Robbie Shakespeare.

Sly was always economical, not so many rim shots as someone like Style Scott, just groove. Channel One, there's a certain sound with the vocal outs. What I like

with Shakespeare is he really had his sound. Again, you're playing something that was a direct influence. This bass playing was the bass playing that turned me on. It was simple, well organized music, very well played. It was allowed to breathe with a top-to-bottom thing happening rather than having too much mid-range.

In the '70s there was a strong affinity between punk and reggae. Why do you think that was?

Well for me it was really simple: before the punk thing came I liked reggae from a very young age, when it was called bubblegum, even before the days of ska. That was in the days of skinheads, 67, 69. At the time you could distinctly hear the bass but the first thing was simply 'chagga, chagga, cha cha', the ska guitar patterns, chops, basically. That made perfect sense to me. I remember it was considered brutal, primitive music at the time by people who were into Progressive rock. It wasn't worthy of being looked at. Then when it developed into the '70s they brought the bass to the fore. I was a bit of a teardrop when I was a lad and I'd go out and about to places and end up in blues [dances], sneaking in and, 'What's the fuckin' music?' Very simply, you'd be standing there with the bass going and be transported somewhere else. This was music of heaven, it was music of the stars, it was mystic. I'm not giving the lie, it's true. It would be total music. It was beyond music, it had a direct physical effect. I think it had a healing effect, I think it's a very healthy, because you got a sense of space, in the same way as those 20th century composers, it ultimately has the same effect. I got into music as I'm neurotic as much as anything else, and that simple thing happens you forget your neurotic self.



LETTFIELD WITH JOHN LYDON

"Open Up" (Full Vocal Mix) (Columbia)

This could be anyone so far [After a brief vocal line] I recognise that voice, I think. Do you know what? That

sounds like Johnny Rotten.

It is him, with Lettfield from 95. This is a Sabres Of Paradise remix.

Sly, right, yeah. I quite like that as I recall, really well done production. My only experience of this sort of stuff is when we've played clubs, where before and after they've got what I still call the disco. This one, you see it come on, the people will be f'd up and they'll go fuckin' mental. It sort of makes sense, because John's a pretty wild character, and he's got a real edge to his voice and somehow it works. It's basically intense, that h-NRG thing happening behind his voice.

You're right, it has got a hi-NRG feel.

His voice is so uncompromising, it's got a certain cut to it. There's always a certain anger in there, so it makes sense to take that simple element and put another simple element behind it that's really full-on.

Do you keep up with what he's doing? Are you still in touch?

I see John every few years, we ran into one another. Last time I seen him was a couple of years ago. The only other times I hear anything is if I see things in the paper, where he's stepped off the Royal Family, which I quite like. I think that's great. You asked me, do I keep abreast of what he's doing? Well I don't because I don't hear much. I don't know if he's releasing records. My view is he should have been doing more. The geezer's got something to offer and should find the right people to work with.



OMME KOLSOUM

"Charrat Habib Alab"
from *La Diva II* (EMI Arabia)

Well, that's the real deal Omme Kolsoum. Shiver. I don't know when it was recorded, maybe the 1930s?

Yet again, big thing in my life. I listened to Radio Caro on the short wave and it was all [Wobble makes a phrasing sound]. And it's natural phrasing, it goes up to the stratosphere and down, so it's the biggest fuckin' phrasing you'd ever have. It was better to have it with all that shit going on, it suited it, seriously. You'd hear these tremendously long introductions where you'd hear the band walk on, all these people clapping — imagine loads of clapping with a phase on it. Then you'd hear somebody warming up on an oud, then the darbuka kicked in and the band would start up. There'd be this cheering and they'd play these most gorgeous motifs, very classical, very complicated stuff. Then it would die down and then you'd hear the crowd go fuckin' mad and obviously you know the singer's on stage.

I've never been an opera fan, but in a way that's like an opera performance because of that civa thing. Although I don't understand the words, that, and your other forms of opera from around the world, your Peking, Cantonese opera, makes a lot more sense to me [than Western opera].

When did you first start integrating Middle Eastern elements in your music? Was it a conscious decision?

A medium. I had this unconscious thing, this connection basically with a 3/4 thing that was untutored, that was hard-wired in, as Aristotle would have said Aristotle said we were born knowing certain things — in modern parlance I was hard-wired. The other elements, the chromatic scales, were sort of in there, but I had to learn to a lot of Arabic music because you've got something there — I think people make the mistake of being very exact, and to me it's not a case, strictly speaking, of geography. What it is, you've got music sung to the glory of God and to the cosmos, if you like, and it's also very related to the culture, the state, the music and the religion and the people are all very connected. All that stuff's remained through religion, because when spiritual values are lost, there's a structure there. Arab music's wonderful fuckin' honour it, it's forced to only listen to one kind of music, it would probably be North African.

MASAKI BATOCH

"You Do Right" from *A Ghost From The Darkened Sea* (The How Sound/Ghost House)

[After a minute or so] All I'll say at this point is it needs Jaki Liebeck to come in on drums. It reminds me slightly of a Can riff. [After the vocal line starts] This has now reminded me of Can, with the vocal, and also a bit Dr John. Can had a lot of that deep thing in them like a New Orleans thing, but this is too linear to be out of America. It's like "You Do Right." It's got that kind of a feel. It's a cover version of that song.

Oh, I got it, YES!

I'm surprised you got it because it's a lot different from the original. Even the lyrics are different.

It'll tell you why it's because I play a lot with Jaki and I can hear Jaki's rhythmic pulse in there. No one's got a rhythmic pulse like that. That's how I know that.

It's by a Japanese musician called Masaki Batoh.

Of course, this would be Japanese, like the geezer who imitated Miles Davis for years. I tell you what, it was fuckin' good! He really understood it. I couldn't believe it when I heard it. It was just about spot on.

How did you get into Can?

I'm not actually a Can fan. Everyone claims to be Can fans now. I'm a Jaki and a Holger [Zukay] fan. I like the groove things with Can, I didn't like the bluesy or rocky things so much.

[Liebeck] is an incredible geezer. Every time he comes over — he comes over once or twice a year — his playing style's a bit different. It's still Jaki [Adopting a German accent] Well, you have to develop or it's pointless. This is amazing, this geezer's getting on for 60 and thriving of changing and developing for the sake of changing and developing. He's a fantastic player that hardly anyone knows. If you're a drummer, he's a master.



DON CHERRY

"Brown Rice" from *Don Cherry* (Horizon)

It sounds like someone's been listening to gamelan. Nice funky bass. They're also listened to Miles Davis — the bassline's like something off

Blotch Brew. I wonder if it's Michael Henderson on bass? Dr John [influence] again with those high vocals.

The bass player's Charlie Haden. His playing here reminded me a bit of you.

Yeah, it's got that flow, that relaxed, loose quality. [The tracks ends] The leader here isn't playing his usual instrument, or at least not so you'd notice, but that's probably not much help. It's from the mid-70s.

[After a pause for thought] OK, at that time the kind of people that were merging — it was the original World Music in a way — were people like Don Cherry.

It is Don Cherry.
When you said it was somebody not playing their own instrument, Don Cherry then, unless the trumpet was going through a wah-wah. That's where the term World Music comes from, and I loved the way they used it because I hate the term now, but they used it in a really

unified sense. And [Jon Hassell's] Fourth World music — it was a real integrity thing.

What do you think of the concept of World Music now?

I think it's a real ghetto in a way. You go where your heart tells you and you go where the music takes you, always. But you also have a view to how you present yourself, and the area I'm very keen to avoid is "World Music", which is a shame really, but it's become a kumpen mass. In any scene it will always be reduced to a lowest common denominator. It's also a hybrid in the wrong way because the best elements are missing a lot of the time. There's a lack of understanding of the rhythmic element, which is to really catch that thing of losing the 'one', it doesn't have that mystical feel, but before it gets to that it fails because it doesn't function. It's basically not serious.

JIN YONG UEN

"Bow To Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva" from *Buddhist Chants And Peace Music* (Japanese Club)

Cui-Jeng. It's either Cui-Jeng or the Japanese version, the harp. And Chinese bamboo flute. Right, Fuckin' hell. This reminds me very much of a mantra to this woman [Wobble shows me a picture of the Bodhisattva]. It's the female version of the Buddha: is it Cantanese? Very Chinese, just hanging in the air, beautiful.

It's Buddhist temple music, it's a mantra. Wait a minute, I might even have a tape. Fuckin' hell, yeah. Hang about. [Increasingly excited, Wobble goes to look for the tape. A bell rings on the track, we are listening to Wobble turns his attention back to the music.] Now the vocals come in, right? [After a very brief pause the vocals do indeed come in as Wobble punches the air.] YES!

Wait a minute, hang about. [Wobble phones his partner Zi Lan Liao on her mobile. Speaking to Zi Lan] I've forgotten the name of the female deity, the female Buddha. [He puts the handset against the speaker.]

Check it out. What is it? Tell the journalists. The geezer's come to play me a load of stuff and I've got to guess who they are. I can't believe he played me this one. I showed him the picture, tell him who it's about. [Wobble hands me the phone and Zi Lan explains the story of the Bodhisattva Guanyin.]

I can't believe that, it's my favourite Chinese track. [To Zi Lan] Oh, you're in a petrol station? I dialled the wrong number, spoke to some bird in Manchester. I should have said, 'Hey listen, you don't know me, but check this out!' All right darling, speak to you later. [Wobble puts the phone down.] Honestly, it's the Divine Mother working, mate, meeting of minds and all that. It's amazing, honestly.

The sleeve notes say that "Traditional Buddhist music is, of course, acoustic. The recordings on this collection represent the more modern form of the genre presently popular in China and Taiwan."

Well, to an extent. Don't get thinking that you go all over China or Taiwan and you'd hear that everywhere because what you'd hear is pop music, their version of Madonna. But I go to the temples. Buddhism's taken a few knocks but it's still very much alive in China. I'm totally blown out by that [track]. The last time I heard that was in Canton. □

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Addis Ababa

The car is a Lada, as are virtually all taxis in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa. In front of us is another Lada, and behind is a minibus. All are crammed with muscular men in suits and dark glasses. Crammed in between them and spread out over the various vehicles are myself, my wife, a manager called Neway and the manager's client, Aster Aweke, perhaps the most popular Ethiopian singer of all, who is returning to the country for a series of homecoming concerts following a prolonged exile in America. Nobody is saying very much and the driver is swerving from side to side trying to avoid potholes which riddle the city road. I don't care. I'm just off the plane from London and having fun.

We're on our way to the Imperial Hotel where, supposedly, a final dress rehearsal for the concerts is scheduled. I say 'supposedly', because it's a bit unclear. Earlier in the day the rehearsal was moved to Jan Meda, the vast, walled field where two of the concerts are to take place and where, every year at the festival of Epiphany, it is said that up to one million people come to sing, dance and celebrate throughout the night. However, it seems that the PA is still stuck in customs after being flown in from Uganda ten days before.

The rehearsal was then rescheduled to take place at the National Exhibition Centre, a real aircraft hanger of a place with a tiled floor, brick half-walls and a corrugated iron roof. I don't know why it didn't happen there, but I am aware that as well as ourselves, there is a party of six musicians, 12 professional dancers, and maybe up to 200 members of the Aster Aweke Fan Club similarly driving around Addis trying to get to a rehearsal, but not knowing exactly where it is supposed to be happening.

We arrive at the Imperial Hotel, a modern concrete block, and after a brief uncomfortable moment with hotel security our convoy disappears into the underground car park. Aster is out of the car and immediately surrounded by the men in suits and dark glasses. I am carried along through concrete corridors until suddenly and bizarrely we are in an open room where an aerobics session is in full flow. Confusion. This is where we are supposed to be rehearsing. No dancers, no musicians, no instruments, no Fan Club, just 'aerobics'. Our party huddles, the 'aerobics' stop and look at Aster ('Is it? No, it can't be!'), and then we're back down the corridors, into the cars and away. On the road we see a minibus full of dancers heading towards the hotel we have just left. Nobody stops.

The original idea for the concerts was relatively simple



and comparatively modest. One show in Addis Ababa central stadium: about 30,000 people. A second in Dire Dawa, a smaller town outside Addis in the middle of an area renowned for chaos, a plant chewed to achieve euphoria: about 10,000 people. A final concert, dinner and dance for the rich and middle class at the Addis Hilton: about 600 people. It was on this basis that Aster was contracted and initial planning made. However, promotion, as any promoter will tell you, is a drag.

There are actually two teams of promoters involved, one in California and their partners here in Addis, among other interests, the Addis promoters publish a major local newspaper. Gradually the homecoming was talked up and up. The concerts were shifted to venues with ever larger capacities as expectations spiralled out of all proportion. Dire Dawa proved impractical, a production team in the UK was contacted and then dropped. As projected costs escalated beyond mere mortals, sponsors appeared on the horizon. Here I become hazy. For many years I'd been hearing about the existence of a super-rich Ethiopian individual whose spending power included chartering Concorde to fly musicians across the Atlantic for a private party. Myth mixes with rumour and I was beginning to doubt his reality. But he does exist, and everybody from the rich

middle classes to the shoeshine boys know of him. He's building the new Sheraton Hotel. He is Pepsi Cola. His mother is Ethiopian, his father Saudi. His name is Aliamudhin, and before we get too cocky about the influence, apparently benign, of a super-rich individual in a country whose abiding image in the West is one of human suffering on a Biblical scale, perhaps we should check our own back yard for media moguls. Was Aliamudhin going to back the concerts? The temperature, and the stakes, rose. In the end, he didn't. And just to make it doubly complicated, alternative sponsors (apparently connected with Coca-Cola and perhaps the government) also evaporated.

As the waters of confusion receded the details were eventually agreed: two consecutive 'peoples' concerts' at Jan Meda fields, and a third performance at the National Exhibition Centre for the rich folks. Tickets were priced at an average of ten birr (about \$1) for the open-air concerts, well within the range of most fans, and 200 birr (about \$20) for the dinner and dance a week later. Nothing quite like this had been tried in Ethiopia before, and now it was to be funded by the promoters alone, between whom fracture lines were beginning to appear, with no sponsorship and on a please-God-let-there-be-profit basis.

In retrospect, the fact that the concerts happened at all, and were an unequivocal success (albeit with closer to 50,000 in total attendance, rather than the 250,000 sometimes dreamed of) was a major achievement for all involved.

I am sitting in the dust of Jan Meda field next to the sound desk, 50 yards ahead, across more dust, is the stage. Behind me there is a row of police with batons, their backs to my back. Behind them is the crowd about 12,000 in all.

The support act has finished and we're waiting for Aster. I can sense the crush behind me, the excitement rising like some tangible plasma. Every so often I look back. People are poking here, especially to the 'lateral' (foreigner/white man). They look and smile back. But I'm only a footnote to the main event and even the police, so far, are cool. Their batons are barely twitching.

Gradually I become aware that I have company in my immediate space. First a small child smug to my right, grinning when our eyes meet, staring fixedly ahead when they don't. Then a young woman to my left. Same procedure, no words exchanged. After ten minutes or so, I've collected maybe a dozen people, each one sitting quietly in anticipation having slipped through the police cordon to sit down beside me. The police appear confused. I'm sure they'd love to move what I now feel is my posse, but what do they do about me?

All such thoughts are immediately terminated as Aster comes on stage. The crowd surges forward and my 12 becomes 12,000, with the front line several yards ahead and marked by a row of police batons flailing in the sun and dust. Engulfed by a mass of bodies, I am happy, confused and exhilarated, but as the first lines of familiar songs boom out I make my excuses and leave for a less bruising vantage point.

As anyone who is familiar with any of the records Aster Aweke has released over the last two decades will tell you, Ethiopian popular music conforms to no Western preconceptions of African music. Merging the classic Sissala line-ups of the 1960s, guitar, bass, drums, keyboards (usually harsh electronic organs rather than smooth digital synthesizers) and a couple of horns plus

lead vocal are still the standard instrumentation for most groups.

The story goes that the first sighting of Western instruments in Ethiopia was when Haile Selassie went to Jerusalem in the early 30s and was so moved by the plight of Armenian children orphaned during the Turkish pogroms of the First World War that he brought a bunch of them back, kitted them out with instruments and made them his 'bodyguard' band. The subsequent Italian invasion brought its own version of hotel bands, and then came the post-war US military bases, pumping out black American soul and R&B.



These foreign inputs were grafted with a G8 rhythm, that can send dancers into an ecstatic shaking of the shoulders, and sinuous, melismatic vocals in pentatonic scales sometimes more reminiscent of Japan than Africa. Like many things Ethiopian, it's unique, and only half the story. There are many ethnic groupings in Ethiopia, each with its principal rhythm and dance. I remember once attending a concert of Ethiopian music in London and being quietly amazed as the whole audience slowly revolved like a giant Catherine wheel around a miniature pin. That is how we know who people are and where they are from, I was told, by the way they dance.

Like anywhere else, the stars of Ethiopian music are the subjects of heated rumour and controversy, from tales of the much-loved veteran singer Tizabun coming to London for plastic surgery after his wife had cut his

throat when she found him in bed with her younger sister (or was it her daughter?) to Mahmoud Ahmed, best known in the West for the Crammed Discs album *Ere Mele Mele*, and well established in Addis with his own shop, label and club, but something of an ambivalent presence due to his apparent endorsement of the new, unpopular government. In Aster Aweke's case, her life outside Ethiopia is blown up to superstar proportions: she is a millionaire, dines with presidents, rides in gold-plated Cadillacs.

Here in Addis rumour is still life. There is a problem with television coverage. One of the promoters used to be head of Ethiopian TV, and the lack of free pre-concert TV news coverage is put down to old rivalries. When paid advertisements are sought they are apparently quoted at ten times the usual rate. However, filming on the day, and using Ethiopian TV cameras, goes ahead. So perhaps everyone's still speaking to each other.

In the Exhibition Centre-cum-aircraft hangar it's the final 'rich folks' concert, and the sound engineer (at an earlier, more stressful moment: "I'm just the fuckin' sound tech. What the fuck do I know?") has finally wrestled the mix into a balance that will satisfy all but the most critical.

It's the first set and Aster is well into the waltz-time ballad "Teyim" ("Have you seen a tall, golden brown man? Golden brown and tall, armed with a sword? To love him is to lose him. Maybe I wish I was his sister"). Her eyes are closed as her left arm extends in an unconscious gesture of anguish. Out of the crowd arcs a ball of coloured cloth, unfurling in slow, graceful motion. As Aster's arm arrives at the limit of its reach, her hand is at the exact point where a millisecond later the fabric will arrive. Her eyes still closed, the cloth ball catches on her hand and unravels to reveal the Ethiopian flag. All eyes are now on the hand holding the flag. It's a unbelievable moment: the thrower could not have known what the catcher could not have known. A pause between beats. The freeze-frame releases. Aster wraps the flag around her head and dances across the stage while the crowd, lost in joy, ululates its delight.

IANI SCOTT

PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE: IANI SCOTT



The concert

Rammellzee is HipHop's mech-warrior, waging covert war on cultural racism with the aid of a bizarre personal mythology that includes graffiti paint-bombs, linguistic tank battles and 14th century vocoders. Confused? That's the idea. Story by Peter Shapiro

THE REMANIPULATOR VERSUS SYNTACTICAL VIRUS

*"From this play of night, light and leather, can I let myself take identity? Equipped with contradictory visions, an ugly hand caged in pretty metal, I observe a new mechanics. I am the wild machinist, past destroyed, reconstructing the present" — Samuel Delany, *Dhalgren**

While drinking malt liquor "old school style" (ie through a straw), rapper, wildstyle visual artist, screenwriter and Garbage God cosmologist Rammellzee says, "I'm not bragger", but I think that I'm a unique person. I don't know anyone else that can armour a letter." Indeed, nobody has taken the figurative implications of HipHop culture as literally or as far out as Rammellzee. Using graffiti's guerrilla assault on "standard" English and rap's B-move sensibility as starting points, he has created what may be the first articulated mythology of HipHop as an entire way of life: the graffiti taggers' rhetorical bombing raids and assassin missions on subway cars become tangible in an imagined world where the letters of the alphabet are armed-for-battle spaceships made of plastic, skateboard wheels, hood ornaments, disused telephones, scrap metal and discarded clothing, a world where rappers are superhero librarians and the wordplay of comic book characters hits with the ideological force of an Elijah Muhammed hip to Derrida.

Rammellzee is the prophet of Iconoklast Panzerism and Gothic Futurism, two homespun philosophies that attempt to make HipHop's basic tropes — obsession with sci-fi and horror imagery, ritual name-calling, "double Dutch remanipulation" of language, and the ethos of recreating ready-mades in its own image — the theoretical bedrock of a culture war against a society that has refused to acknowledge the existence, let alone genius, of African and Asian ways of life. Rammellzee formulated these ideas in 1979 and has doggedly pursued them ever since through a peripatetic career that has included one of the greatest HipHop jams on wax,

symbolic bombing of the New York City transit system, gallery exhibitions in New York and Europe, a stint collaborating with Bill Laswell, and a screenplay for what he calls an "intellectual horror film".

Rammellzee began detonating his paint bombs on trains at the dawn of HipHop in the mid-70s. "I ended up bombing trains because it was a competitive culture," he says. "I disliked school, and the things they were teaching me were not interesting enough to me. But the things that were being done to the trains

"I had a war with two people [other graffiti writers] on the trains between 1974-78. I told them there is a higher structure of war going on and that armamentation [of graffiti's lettering] had to happen because you guys were going to continue to 'bomb' with a simple style, called 'bubble' style or 'bubblegum' style or 'bombersm', that you would have to take these arrows and turn them into missiles and start launching them from one train car or one page or history number to another one. If you launch from 1B47 to 1523, you launch the missile not into the future, but backwards. Now you were disrupting time as the timetables. You had time 'versing' time."

Aside from his 'EG' (Evolution Griller) tag that "plugged" Gotham straphangers on the IRT subway line in the 70s, Rammellzee first came to public attention in 1983 with a 12" single called "Beat Bop", a dual with fellow rapper K-Rob. Dressed in a prototypically schematic, monochrome Jean-Michel Basquiat sleeve that proclaimed its place of origin as "New York, NY", "Beat Bop" picked up where Grandmaster Flash And The Furious Five's "The Message" left off, turning it into a "death, death, death yam yam". Simultaneously funny, frightening and indecipherable, "Beat Bop" is all about rap as the invention of a new way of speaking: "I know ZZ that can rock quaklike the Iconoklast Panzerism to the stock/ust rock on like the finger lick/finger poppi! has poppi! d-d-d-d stop bunny rock/The bunny rock a-yo don't



stop/That long fmgal at the end of my tail/Oh my pinky cocaine make it slip-a-my lip / Like a 38 shootin' real straight/Because I'm down like a double-dutch remonopolion on the best Grandmaster make a move when I'm shootin' to the boom-boom"

Like all great songs, "Beat Box" creates a new musical language, as well. Where most HipHop tracks of the time are underpinned with beats that are as subtle as cement shoes, "Beat Box" is a spongy, dubby, stringy masterpiece that feels like it fits in and out of consciousness: off-kilter violins creep into the mix like they're stalking Rammellzee and K-Rob; everything is surrounded by water drop percussion and bubbles of sound, the bongos bely, rather than shape, the groove, one moment Rammellzee sounds like he's rapping from the catacombs, only to surface with pinpoint clarity for the next word. It does indeed sound like "the best from the depths of Hell."

Basquiat, one of the so-called bad boys of the 80s New York art scene, is also credited as producing the record, but Rammellzee remembers it differently.

"Basquiat had nothing to do with that record, man," he claims. "Yo, the dude tried to hand me a piece of paper and wanted me to say what he wrote. I crushed the shit up and threw it on the floor. I said we gotta go gangsta style, doogy style on the street corner and we went for it. I started talking like a pimp and he's [K-Rob] the kid coming home from school. That's the story behind the record. It was [A] Diaz who did the beats and everything. That boy [Basquiat], all he did was give up the money. That's just people primpin' a dude to make sure something stays alive that they've been lyin' about for years to keep alive."

While exhibiting his paintings in New York, London, Italy and the Netherlands, Rammellzee worked with Bill Laswell on his own Gettoverts project and provided the HipHop element in the diasporic funkathon of Sly & Robbie's 1987 *Rhythm Killers* album. *Misanthropic Moving*, the 1988 Gettoverts album, is pure beat box treachery. Featuring Rammellzee and Laswell alongside Bootsy Collins, Grandmawer D ST (now DXT), guitarist Nicky Skopelitis and Shock Dell, the album expands on Rick Rubin's Def Jam experiments with the booming systems of Metal and HipHop by appending explicit politics to the ensuing collision.

"The Lecture" features Rammellzee donning his "Master Killer" mask, dropping demented science over some patented Laswellian Industrial funk grooves. The metal mechanics of the music are emphasized by Rammellzee's "gangsta duck" voice which is made more inhuman by the use of echo chambers and vocoders which rival Roger Troutman's electro-cathartory in terms of bizarre Afro-futurism.

"The vocoder was invented in the 14th century," Rammellzee says. "That's true.

"The vocoder was invented in the 14th century. It was a string-based thing and the monks who used it would breathe back into themselves and emit strange vocal vibrations"

It was a string-based thing and the monks who used it would breathe back into themselves and it emitted strange vocal vibrations. Bambaataa and Fearless Four blew my mind with the vocoder. Bambaataa taught me a lot of stuff, but I often think that I really am a monk from the 14th century. I know too much, but if I say this, There's no possible way that, if I didn't go to school, I'm going to know all this shit, since I don't read and I only look at that [he points to a dictionary], and that's not a book you read."

The alleged connection with medieval monks is not mere sophistry, but a vital part in the mythology of Ikonoklast Panzerism and Gothic Futurism.

"From the calligraphy days of the 14th century, riding on the subways, we had illuminated manuscripts (14th century), and in the tunnels we had wildstyle which

came to ornamentation," Rammell explains. "Ornamentation to ornamentation. What was being done on the trains at the time was a taking over of language. This is like Ebonics now [the proposed teaching of black English in American inner city schools]. The dictionary describes on its own tree [he shows me a dictionary with the

language tree], you see there's no African or to Asian on it, nothing like that. So I figured that there was another type of war, a political war of languages, where — let me say that I'm not a racist, but I am racing — certain people had used language in a dominating effort to take over other languages or pictograms, and now there is a problem in schools where African languages are not allowed.

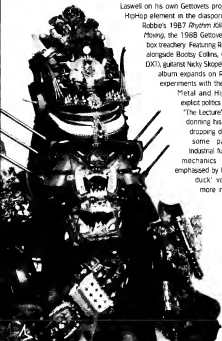
"Ikonoklast Panzerism is simply taking a wing, turning an arrow from Chinese calligraphy and illuminated manuscripts from the tenth to the 14th century, before Gutenberg's printing press, into a massie and putting wheels on the letter," Rammell continues. "I've had a lot of priority type people tell me that you can't make a letter move. Oh, yes I can. It's a statement of symbol destroyer, armoured division in practice. Gothic Futurism, of course, means medieval mechanism, architecturally structured in practice. Straight out of the book, nothing new."

By rupturing standard syntax and wearing flashy clothes, graffiti became the most obvious example of what Henry Louis Gates has called "signifyin'": the flipping of language as a way for blacks to cope in a white world. Ikonoklast Panzerism, however, is a teenage aerosol assassin's wet dream. Reversing the field and linking black vernacular with the Church's efforts to keep people dumb in the Middle Ages through the exclusive use of Latin is a masterstroke of inventiveness that only gets freer in Rammellzee's scenario for his Letter Racers and Monster Models.

Encompassing numerous sculptures, a soon-to-be completed screenplay and a performance art extravaganza, *Letter Racers And Monster Models* is Rammellzee's attempt to put his theories into practice in the same Afrofuturistic world as George Clinton's Atomic Dog and Samuel Delany's Rak Korga.

"I have written this script," Rammell explains, "which is based around a gambler's bet where HipHop has become a war effort to overthrow a language structure, to overthrow the dictionary, or lexiconary, to make sure that in 180 years or whatever, people have another language to overthrow the dominant language. The alpha-beta system, once the 'a' was dropped, became 'alphabeta'. I turned it into a person that guy over there who looks like a lizard [he indicates one of the 15 or so masks which are placed along one wall of his apartment]. He has a twin brother called Lords-Minus and they had a bet that the 'j', the 'u', the 'w' and the 'x' should not have been placed in language for the human species to speak at all in time. Without these four letters, there would be no rhyme. The letters are in contradiction to the word of God. Before there was the word, there had to be a letter or a pictogram, right? No one says that in the Bible, no one says that anywhere, I contradict. So I wrote a script based around this."

"I call all this 'intellectual horror'. Not no girl with big tits running down the stairs, falling down. Intellectual horror. It's got very little violence in it. The words are



encrypted where you got to know vocabulary pretty well, but if you do, you're gonna walk out of that theatre scared to shit because you gonna wonder, 'What the fuck is he talking about?' Oh shit, I know what he's talking about.' And I hope it don't start no riots. You know sometimes when people see devil-worshipping movies they go and read the Bible, but when they see this, they're gonna go and read the dictionary. When they read the first four pages, they're gonna say, 'Oh shit, how come these languages are not in this book?' Now that will present to them the fact there is another type of take-over."

Rammellzee has created his Letter Racers, Monster Models and Garbage Gods out of urban detritus. Uttered around his loft in the Tribeca district of New York, they look like arbutus sculptures of the Pedro Bell/Dwight Lloyd freestylers that adorned the covers of Parliament/Funkadelic albums, with added Kabuki make-up and hypertrophic Joseph Cornell box collages for bodies. In the *Drop Stop* Womans video of a performance Rammell gave a few years ago, the 26 letters of the alphabet have become tanks that race each other on high wires while Rammellzee, the protagonist of the story, does battle with Lords-Films to the accompaniment of breakbeats and a track by Slayer, "so that the history of the Transverse [universe] can continue to speak in their languages in peace instead of the 'no-zone' murmur of war and verbal segregation".

Talking further about the ideas behind *Letter Racers* and *Monster Models*, Rammell says, "When I was dealing with librarians they kept talking about Noah's Ark and I kept questioning them for a couple of years. I came to the conclusion that I wanted to write a horror movie that there wasn't no two-by-two animals in Noah's Ark. There's no possible way someone called Noah could possibly gather every God-damned animal on the planet, so I came to the conclusion that there was a group of humans, humanoid, Caucasoids, and they landed on the Caucasus Mountains as Caucasoids and they crash-landed in this big ship that turned from galvanised energy into wood. They landed with the genetic code and technological advancement to enslave what the dictionary calls 'heathens' — anyone not from the Caucasus Mountains. Around the 800s the dictionary was starting to be formed. After the Greeks, the Phoenicians, we ended up with a problem of slavery, not slavery of people, but the taking over of languages, which I consider to be a subliminal war, where the ones who could conquer conquered from one side of the planet to the other and afterwards you had a dictionary compiled. I called the Earth a penal colony about to be turned into a god or goddess, but the things that are on it — the lambs, the sheep, the trees, the flowers — that's all disease. But the ones that learned how to talk crashlanded, like I said, in the Ark of Noah."

"We can still to this day, from the satellite right above Turkey, still see an engine glowing, right now, and I think you know this. Don't you know this? You don't know this? There is still a very bright light sitting right up on Mount Ararat, the other half of Noah's Ark, and we can't get near it 'cause it would start a fucking war. Where the hell did it come from?"

White folk as aliens, superhero rappers as librarians or guardians of culture, letters arming themselves for a linguistic fight to the death, wordplay as the key to unravelling prevailing power structures: these are the core elements of Rammellzee's deceptively cartoonish HipHop cosmology. It might look like the Kiss boys reincarnated as video game ninjas, but the "symbol destruction" of Ikonoklast Panzerism is in full effect.

In the catalogue to one of his Dutch exhibitions, Rammell wrote, "I'm going to finish the war... You have the gladiators, the freestyle dancers, warning on the ground. You have the graffiti writers warning in the air or in space. You have the translators, the DJs, the MCs. The DJs make the sounds of the pelicans inside the graffiti element or the tank. Their sound is the perfect tuning of the engines, the engines in the tank that go bam-bam-bam. That is best culture." □



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Once described as the most argumentative rock musician in the world, **Chris Cutler's** position as head of the ReR Megacorp label now places him at the centre of a global network of radical musical activity. Mike Barnes speaks to him about his years as a member of Henry Cow, and a life spent in opposition rock

corporation of

The headquarters of Chris Cutler's record label ReR Megacorp are situated at the end of a parade of shops in the rather anonymous South London suburb of Thornton Heath. In the area once occupied by a design company is the ground-floor office-cum-storefront, while Cutler's own living and work spaces take up the next two levels. A track from *Nirvana Unplugged* drifts down from the top storey. Cutler smiles at the incongruity as he wanders up from the kitchen with two cups of amphetamine-strength espresso.

Drummer extraordinaire, critical theorist, composer, entrepreneur — swagall of the avant garde, perhaps, Renaissance man, even — Cutler was also called "The most argumentative rock musician in the world" by a weekly music paper while a member of Henry Cow in the 1970s. Although not displaying the tendency during the interview, he admits the sobriquet was applied with some justification.

"I was very opinionated then, because everything seemed more black and white to me than it does now," he explains. "We [Henry Cow] were permanently in a state of struggle, not only with the conditions of our existence, the kind of ecology of being in a group, but also with our instruments and the music we were playing — and each other. It often was pretty grim, we'd fight a lot. So we were in a pretty highly aroused condition and that probably made us seem for more elitist and argumentative than might have actually been the case. But we did have a kind of political agenda in those days."

Cutler joined the Cambridge-based Henry Cow in 1971 shortly after they had won John Peel's Rockerjenny Knocks contest with an eclectic, quirky style of music that even made space for the kind of "lunatic" tendencies associated with The Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band. The following year, the group — Cutler, guitarist Fred Frith, keyboardist/saxophonist Tim Hodgkinson, saxophonist Geoff Leigh, bassist John Greaves — decided to make a serious go of it, decamping to London. By 1973 their profile was high enough for them to land a deal with the nascent Virgin Records. Their sense of humour — not something readily associated with a group whose formation was partly a consequence of the Prague Spring and the 1968 Paris student riots —



extended to the cover of their debut album *Henry Cow Legend*, which depicted an image of a knitted sock. Legend — Leg. End. Not many got the joke.

Whimsy became less important as the group evolved towards a sort of self-governing musical and social commune informed by such dicta as Maoist notions of self-improvement. As far as music was concerned, they were writing formidably complex compositions out with dislocating bursts of free improvisation. Cutler agrees that there was something intimidating about the group musically, and in terms of its personality, both to their audience and their peers.

"It was probably intimidating, yes," he says. "Also, we were such a close-knit group, I'm sure what we had amounted to a private language."

A good example of their position in relation to the prevailing musical climate is their notorious — and for many owners, least played — side on the 1974 *Greasy Truckers* live double album. It's a series of uncompromising, largely improvised pieces driven like a wedge between contributions from Gong, Camel and Global Village Trucking Company. Even Fred Frith's immense trousers — which looked like they had originated as part of an oversized 50s suit — were considered subversive in the heyday of the loon pants.

With rock musicians struggling to be taken seriously in the mid-70s, an increasing number of groups, raised on psychedelia and R&B, looked towards classical forms for spurious credibility, to buy into the emergent notion of "progressive rock." "There was a lot of inflated nonsense about it being a real art form but without any theory behind it," opines Cutler.

Henry Cow were also a rock group who wanted to be taken seriously, but they were immersed in the music of Sun Ra, Ornette Coleman, Syd Barrett's Pink Floyd and early Mothers Of Invention. Most progressive rock groups drew upon the baroque or the 19th-century Romantic era to fuel their particular form of bombast. Henry Cow were sifting through different areas. "Because we were rock musicians there was no academy and there were no rules we could lift anything from anywhere we wanted."

Cutler explains. So Henry Cow took their inspiration from the more austere legacy of Bartók, Schoenberg and Stravinsky. The rock chamber ensemble feel that they evoked, particularly on their 1973 album *Unrest* (with bassoonist Lindsay Cooper replacing Geoff Leigh), was quite intentional.

"Obviously you need a very large orchestra to get away with the *Ring Cycle*. It's written big," Cutler says. "Rock groups don't need all those people. Magma were just as powerful as any of that just by being loud and organising their compositional and expressive forces. Schoenberg spotted this effect very early in an article he wrote about recording. He pointed out that one no longer has to write for huge resources and put up with masses of blurry doubling. What recording enables us to do is express the material in its purest form. Each compositional line can be carried by a single instrument with greater clarity, making a small chamber group highly musically effective."

"And of course, if Carl Orff had had Magma at his disposal he would have been in seventh heaven, because the effects he often tries to create with several grand pianos hammering on the low notes, for example, Magma could easily achieve with the application of technology and amplification. It's hard to apply this observation and practice to music before about 1910, because the idea of sound and disposition of sound changed radically in the first quarter of this century. That's why dragging Romantic music into Progressive rock in the '70s was so basically reactionary, I think."

"What was more interesting from our point of view was to use the music of this

out on intuitive faith alone would have raised the question, sooner rather than later, why? Why put up with little money and put in years of hard work for a reward of constant marginalisation? Especially when they were coming up against the mainstream-defining corporate structure of the music industry (Henry Cow might have been fired by Virgin in 1973, but they were unceremoniously dropped by the label two years later). Without the self-questioning, and the functioning of the group as a confrontational political statement made flesh — together with links forged with like-minded musicians — it's unlikely that Henry Cow would have made the impact it did in a ten-year life span. *Roar Magazine* would probably not exist and Cutler would be engaged in very different activities today.

From a punter's view Henry Cow could be serious fun. My only brush with the group live was as an impressionable teenager just before they broke up in 1978. Memories remain of a group who were thorny, viscerally powerful, perverse at times, with Cutler centre-stage, cheeks sucked in, arms flailing in flamboyant, angular movements over his kit, occasionally utilising stones and bits of wood in an improvisational foray. Henry Cow were such a singular unit that Cutler retrospectively disassociates them from all other 'Progressive' groups (although he admits they were initially influenced by Soft Machine, in fact, Henry Cow performed with Soft Machine's ex-drummer Robert Wyatt in the mid-'70s, and Cutler and Wyatt later worked together in *News From Babel*). "We didn't work in this country, so most of the groups



Henry Cow with members of Slapp Happy



Cutler, 70s

century, the century of recording technology, when the sound, the elements and the basis of music changed, instead of running backwards trying to find something before all those horrible things happened — when music was really music and it sounded nice."

Cutler's experience with Henry Cow (the group's name was a contraction of the US composer Henry Cowell) was formative both in terms of his musical education and the development of his rigorous theoretical angle on music making. In his 1985 book *Ale Utter Popular*, which contains politicised depressions on Sun Ra, The Residents, Elvis, Phil Ochs, as well as the progressive impulse in art, he claims it is a primary need "that musicians themselves develop a theory of music and culture derived from their own practice. Such a theory, accompanied by a struggle for a meaningful form, must be the starting point of our work." Crucially, this is not the detached hypothesis of a Cultural Studies theorist, but rather a tenet born from a pragmatic need for Henry Cow to justify to themselves "the kind of musical extremism" that they were pursuing.

The group needed a reason to carry on doing what they were doing, because to sail

we had any dealings with were not English," Cutler explains. "As for groups who were thought of as our peers, ie Hatfield And The North or King Crimson, goodness knows what they thought..."

In common with a number of UK musical experimenters both then and now, Henry Cow sought their audiences in mainland Europe. Here the group hit on the idea of corraling various kindred spirits together under the banner *Rock In*

"Richard Branson always wanted to be rich and famous, and his various enterprises were stepping stones. I don't want to run an airline. I don't want to be in that position."

Opposition. This was a showcase for groups such as Stormy Six from Italy and Belgium's Univers Zero, highlighting their view that the age of Anglo-American hegemony in popular music was over. The group staged one festival in London under the *Rock In Opposition* banner, but despite the potential for establishing a formal network of radicalised European musicians, it soon disappeared.

"It probably did what it had to do and then bowed out quickly," reckons Cutler. "What was important was to create this public domain idea, which is what it became. Lots of people said, 'Oh, we're a kind of *Rock In Opposition* group, this is like *Rock In Opposition* music', long after the thing itself [was disbanded]."

"We started off with big aspirations to make some statements, to make some manifesto, and we couldn't really agree on anything, except that we kind of approved of each other's attitudes in conducting musical experiments. All the links that had been forged stayed where they were: the people themselves kept in touch, Recommended Records that was set up as part of the action still exists, other independent record companies still exist. We continue to help one another organise concerts, record distribution and festivals. The exclusive 'members only' organisation didn't need to exist anymore."

Recommended Records was formed initially as a distribution outlet when RIO folded and Cutler found himself with a new role as a businessman. Recommended and its various subsidiary labels were eventually merged into ReR Megacorp which releases

its own music and distributes other small independent labels. With hindsight Cutler feels that the RecommendedRIO era brought a new musical genre into focus.

"I think there were plenty of people who'd gone along the same road we'd gone along, who belonged to the generation that we belonged to, who'd been inspired by the things I spoke about: different types of music, recording technology and so on. And in a way RIO and ReR helped to create — or at least bring it into a sense of self

"Without theory, all we have left is opinion and shopping, and you can't make an intelligent art form out of that"

bankrupt, not being forced into stopping what you're doing, learning the rules of how to survive in this particular neck of the jungle, seems to me perfectly compatible with holding political views."

Just as Henry Cow didn't justify its existence purely by raw enthusiasm, so the ReR catalogue isn't simply stocked up with Cutler's favourite music. I ask him to clarify how much the music that is released on ReR is a reflection of his personal taste and how much it needs to fit certain criteria. "Well, 'The unexamined life is not worth living', a famous quote [by Socrates], and I don't consider that my judgement is just subjective, so although one of the criteria for the things we distribute or release is that I like it, I think that the things I like I don't like simply for capricious reasons, because I do have a kind of philosophical or analytical approach to this whole field."

"That is why I wrote a theoretical book asking about the relations between electrification, recording technology, rock and its extended forms and what they imply, because I think that without theory, all we have left is opinion and shopping, and you can't make an intelligent art form out of that."

"So the things which I like are things which are asking the same questions or proposing answers to the same questions. I think it's definitely an autocratic



consciousness — a genre, a tendency in music which had seemed not to be a tendency before, just a lot of individuals working away alone. In retrospect, as soon as you suggest that this is a genre, a tendency, that this means something, people feel less alone. They see themselves as part of something."

"Very fast a kind of retrospective history comes into being with all the influences that bind it suddenly in focus. What seems so obvious now only became obvious after a certain point was passed, and this has as much to do with creation as discovery. It was as if we turned a corner and there it all was, the elements were already in place, of course, there simply hadn't been a handle with which to grasp them."

Suspicious eyebrows are usually raised when someone with an active background in left wing politics assumes an entrepreneurial role. For the cynical onlooker it's easier if the individual fails to reconcile their political beliefs with success in an industry that is not only starkly-infested, but where smaller fry are regularly devoured by Jaws-sized specimens. Cutler can see no contradictions in the role he has maintained for nearly 20 years.

"Show me anybody [who lives] outside the system: it's impossible. You can go live on a mountain in Tibet, maybe, but here, every time you flush the lavatory or turn on the electricity you're compromised. So for me, running a business is a way of intervening in an environment which would be much more hostile to me and people like me if there wasn't somebody carving out a corner of it and defending that corner from what's 'normal'. So running a business, in other words not going

judgement but it's an informed judgement. And it's not that I'm saying I'm right about this stuff, it's saying I know my own field and in my field these are the things that I recommend. That's why it's called Recommended Records, and it's the same logic that I apply now to ReR."

The current ReR catalogue lists 60 CD titles, its distribution portfolio contains over 1000 releases, while the ReR Quarterly (a CD/book compilation package) is running into its fourth volume. I ask Cutler why he thinks the company has been a success.

"I'm a sucker for a chance in buying things they don't know from us because of our track record," he replies. "They trust that we're not just putting stuff out to make money, that there's really some content to it, there's some quality control. Sales tend to support that, which is why things go on and on selling and don't just peak and die. They do have some testing quality. Art Bears and Faust records, for instance, have sold steadily since 1978. Most of the things that we have released do have that kind of staying power."

"I'm a total ignoramus when it comes to the record market and the public. If I knew how to make records sell, and decided that that's what I wanted to do, I wouldn't release any of the things that I release. All I do know is what I think is good and is going to last, or what I'm interested in producing myself, and after that I throw it onto the table and let some other forces decide about it."

When Virgin Records was established in the early 70s it seemed — at least

superficially — to offer a home for the disenfranchised avant garde. But Cutler is keen to quash the suggestion that there is any similarity between Virgin in that era and ReR today.

"There's a radical theological difference," he says. "In that Richard Branson always wanted to be rich and famous and his various enterprises were stepping stones, he was going somewhere. I don't want to run an airline. I don't want to be in that position."

Releases on ReR usually sell between 2-4000 copies, but there are some specific releases which Cutler feels were potentially bigger sellers but didn't make it in the market place. He lists Japanese group Who Ha Ha, American group Biot, who use an innovative mixture of sampled cut-ups, real-time playing and songs sung by Haifa Suzanne Lewis, as well as Russian radicals ZGA who employ self-manufactured and conventional instrumentation.

Cutler was also indirectly responsible for the renaissance of Faust (who Henry Cow supported on their first UK tour in 1973). Via ReR, he had kept *The Faust Tapes* in print (it was initially released by Virgin), and salvaged the group's 'lost' album *Music And Elsewhere*, which was packaged together with outtakes and rarities as *71 Minutes Of Faust*. Sometime in the early 90s, Faust's Jean-Hervé Peron dropped by the ReR office to pick up a royalty cheque and was so struck by the level of recent sales that he felt the group must play again in London, which they did at the Marquee in 1992.



Henry Cow and Robert Wyatt



Cassiber

As a side-effect of Cutler's insatiable desire to seek out and promote new music, he has been involved in scores of musical combinations since Henry Cow's demise. *The Art Bears* (with Fred Frith and Dagmar Krause), the aforementioned *News From Babel*, which also included Krause, Zeena Parkins and Lindsay Cooper, the possibly still extant *Cassiber*, *Duck And Cover* and *The Wooden Birds* (who metamorphosed into a reformed Pere Ubu in 1987). His collaborative CV is enormous, including the nearly-pop of *The (EC) Nudes* and *Hail*, improvising duets with harpist Parkins and guitarist Fred Frith, among others, and playing the strictly composed work of the French Canadian guitar quartet, *Les Quatre Guitares De L'Apocalypse-Barre*.

His personal network has grown since the demise of RIO and Henry Cow's influence on his activities can still be felt. The group's remit of both composition and improvisation is something that Cutler did not want to abandon, but a branching out was necessary — these twin activities are rarely found under one umbrella. He says he finds all of his projects satisfying ways to exercise "musical muscles".

With uncharacteristic vagueness Cutler claims to have appeared on "over 75" albums. One of the most recent and innovative is the self-titled debut by p53, the ambitious semi-improvisational quartet featuring Cutler on drums and electronics, two concert pianists, East German electroacoustic composer Lutz Glandien on real-time processing and computer samples, and Otomo Yoshihide on turntables. Cutler initiated this particular project and he features in a playing capacity on a significant

number of ReR releases. I put it to him that as he's the head of the label that provides the forum for so many of these collaborations, doesn't that inevitably put him in some position of control?

"No, not really. I don't think so," he responds. "When you're working on a recording or a piece of music you're not really thinking about anything except optimising the recording of the piece of music you're not tailoring it to anything. I think performing, playing — which includes working out parts, making suggestions for arrangements — is a function like being an actor. It's got zick to do with self expression, which I can't understand, and everything to do with trying to find out what the music wants. If you're an actor, you have to understand your character, you have to understand the psychodynamics of the drama you're involved in, and then you have to make it work."

One product of the linkages that Cutler and associates have forged is that conventional locality has now vanished. "If I want to put a group together," he explains, "I don't think well, who lives nearby? p53 is gathered out of Poland, Canada, Japan, Germany and Britain. It's all the same. The concert is a flight away and it's not very important where from. There's a whole community of people who collaborate on such projects, who meet and socialise at concert places all over the world that and the virtual world of CDs and recording is our locality. It's McLuhan's Global Village in action and it's very exciting to be part of it."

"The next things I'm doing are concerts with Zeena in Spain, Scandinavia and

Hungary, with Jon Rose and Otomo Yoshihide in Belgrade, and with Peter Blegvad and the Italian group NORMA p53 is playing at Angelica [Festival] in Bologna, and I have concerts in France, Chile, Germany and Argentina with Frith."

"I have a new song record with Stephan Tscheyner and Bob Drake in the making," he continues. "Last year I wrote a long music radio text which will be performed live in Italy in May, linking three radio stations and a number of different players and speakers. I am also doing a radio piece and some recording in Berlin with Lutz Glandien. And there will be a large music theatre piece in France in 1998. This is new territory for me and very interesting. Plus a few lectures and I'm trying to finish another book. ReR has another ten releases, too, this year."

Cutler is in an unusual if not unique position as an active musician who runs a label and distribution outfit — which he wryly describes as "always teetering on the edge of oblivion". So do all these concurrent activities make his a stressful existence?

"It's pretty exhausting. Pavlov did an experiment with some puppies, where he put an iron bar at about head level in their cage so they were always banging their heads as they walked about. And since they were banging their heads from a very early age, they didn't yelp or make a fuss because that was their reality. It's a bit like that." □
ReR Musicaparc, 39 Beulah Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8JG, fax 0181 771 3138. ReR releases are also distributed in the UK through RITMOS.

For the neophyte, the **ReR Megacorp** catalogue can be a disorientating maze of unfathomable hybrids and hellish obscurities. Edwin Pouncey directs you to ten of the label's best

ART BEARS *Hopes And Fears* (ABC02)

This was to have been a Henry Cow album until the group decided that it shouldn't be released under that banner. Chris Cutler, Fred Frith and vocalist Dagmar Krause (along with various ex-members of the by now disbanded Henry Cow) took what was in the can and continued working on it, creating a series of unrehearsed song-based passages that opened out into on-the-spot improvisation. Released in 1978, the year punk's howl was beginning to fray at the edges, *Hopes And Fears* discards dead skin to allow a shrier beast to emerge. Krause's Garboesque vocals and the music's occasional nod to The Residents produced a record that is still baffling, bemused and brilliant.



CASSIBER *A Face We All Know* (ReR CCB)

An avant-punk power trio, no less, made up of Cutler, Christoph Anders and Heiner Goebbels. Cassiber was born out of the rubble

of the fallen Berlin Wall, a metaphor for oppression that the trio were all too eager to take an artistic sledgehammer to. Armed with texts from Cutler and novelist Thomas Pynchon, Cassiber weaved Rock in Opposition art rant, speed punk attitude and contemporary classical discipline, and our roared this masterpiece. Intercut with snatches of spoken word, sampled sound effects and Cutler's furious, flailing drum attack, *A Face We All Know* tramples down several musical banners.

CHRIS CUTLER/FRED FRITH

Live Volume 2 (ReR CCFX2)

A companion collection to *Live in Moscow* (ReR CCFX 1) featuring a further helping of folsam and jetsam from Cutler and Frith. On "Tiroldheim" and "Berlin" (recorded during the latter part of 1991) both players generate alien sounds from their instruments. Cutler hooks himself up to the main electrical supply to scrape, scratch and explore the outer rim of his drum kit, while Frith tapers and flutters over his feedback like a gigantic hummingbird. The disc's historic bonus track, "Lumogies", is taken from the long deleted *ReRdu* 45 from 1979, "mastered from a scratched old disc" due to the fact that the original tape had turned to dust. It rattles out of the speakers (eventually) sounding like a battered old bootleg, but still shooting sparks.

CHRIS CUTLER/LUTZ GLANDIEN

Domestic Stories (ReR LSPICD)

Another titanic team effort as Cutler joins forces with East German electroacoustic composer Lutz Glandien (with contributions from Frith, Krause and saxophonist

Afred 23 Harth). Based around a mysterious "neo-Brechtian song cycle centring on three women — Lith, Salome and Magdalene", *Domestic Stories* is haunted by the disembodied spirit of The Art Bears. All involved supply powerful performances, but it is Krause's vocal (sometimes electronically treated) that holds the record together and allows the rest of the group to indulge themselves. The strange mixture of rock, contemporary classical, Euro jazz and Old Testament cabaret is gripping. A personal favourite.

THE (EC) NUDES

Vanishing Point (ReR N1)

Described as "an alternative supergroup", The (EC) Nudes — Cutler, Tone Oogs/Cutler bass guitarist, sax player and vocalist Amy Oemio, and Swiss guitarist Wadi Gyja (who has played alongside sax giant Peter Brotzman) — assembled this quirky and charming collection of global pop songs in a French studio before handing it over to marmoset Bob Drake. *Vanishing Point* slams out of the speakers with a ferocity that must have stunned the devoted Henry Cow/Art Bears fan, as cany clashes with calypso and free jazz postures rudely against art rock. The (EC) Nudes toured Europe through 1994 and are remembered with affection by many who saw them.



FAUST *71 Minutes Of...* (ReR F1CD)

After reissuing their seminal *The Faust Tapes* (originally available on Virgin for 49p), Cutler and the group gathered any

remaining "Party Tapes" which had landed on the cutting room floor and glued them together to produce a series of limited edition singles, EPs and two LPs. *71 Minutes* collects this material and fits it neatly on a single CD. While not as revolutionary sounding as their previous albums from this period, there is no denying that Faust (even on their outtakes) were on the cusp of a unique musical style, one that ingeniously interbeddled purple-faced pop with the hoary old avant-garde. An important insight into Faust's early 70s experiments that is partly let down by one of the shoddiest packages in the entire ReR catalogue.

GROUND ZERO

Revolutionary Pekinese Opera (ReR GL1)

Never one to let the grass grow under his feet, Cutler saluted the 90s Japanese underground by releasing *Ground Zero's* magnificent, jaw dropping remix of Heiner Goebbels/Afred 23 Harth's *Peking Opera*. The idea of a Japanese group paying homage to old comrades, together with the fact that leader Otomo

Yoshinori reveals traces of plunderphonics pioneers John Oswald and Christian Marclay in the way he organises sound, were reason enough for ReR to release this updated version. A fantastic blast of *Blade Runner* driven sound imagery with a finale that, once stored inside your memory chip, is difficult to erase.



SLAPP HAPPY *Acanthosac Nloom* (ReRSHCD)

Worldly, Virgin rejected the original Faust version of Slapp Happy's *Casablanca Nloom* (a creative relationship which

surfaced on Sort Of: Slapp Happy's debut LP which featured involvement from Faust and their then producer Uwe Nettelbeck). Instead the company chose to release another version which ultimately flopped, along with the later *Desperate Strangers*. Slapp Happy's part album with Henry Cow *Acanthosac Nloom* is the original "band approved" version of the debut album featuring Peter Blegvad, Dagmar Krause, Anthony Moore, Faust, and Nettelbeck at the controls. It still sounds impressive, an odd and sometimes moving collection of surreal, less nonsensical modern folk songs in which Bob Dylan meets Edward Lear. In an ideal world Slapp Happy's haunting ballad "The Drum" would have made it into the Top Ten.

MICHAEL VOGT

Tuba Intim (ReR TUBA1)

VARIOUS ARTISTS

CHCD (ReR CHCD)

Two oddities: Vogt is the lead tuba player for The Berlin Symphony Orchestra and "one of the prime exponents of the art of tuba playing". On *Tuba Intim* (The Intimate Tuba) he tackles works written by (among others) Igor Stravinsky, Morton Feldman, Lutz Glandien and himself. Best of all, though, is his interpretation of Raymond Luedke's "Wonderland Quets for Two Tubas And Narrator" (1971) where the guttural burp and ooze of Vogt's extraordinary instrument transforms the spoken texts of Lewis Carroll (in German) into a performance akin to Kurt Schwitters being backed by a Fluxus brass band.

The electroacoustic works from 1970-90 collected together on the *CHCD* disc are equally oddball. Pieces by Georg Kretzer, Steve Moore, Lutz Glandien and Jaroslav Krcek are sandwiched in between John Oswald's "Parade" (based on the Eric Satie ballet) and Richard Trynall's hilarious "Ornaggio A Jerry Lee Lewis", a plunderphonic tribute to the demon king of rock 'n' roll which looks back of his "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On" like a teased Rotweiler and refuses to let go. □

charts

Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound

Demos 15

Panasonic — Kulma (Blast First)
Ryoji Ikeda — ++ (Touch)
Murse With Wound — Spiral Insana (United Dames)
Changes — Fire Of Life (Chuluu)
Ghost — Lama Rabi Rabi (Drag City)
John Zorn — Filmworks IV (Tzadik)
Ground Zero — Ground Zero (God Mountain Europe)
Mike Patton — Pranzo Oltanzisa (Tzadik)
Achim Wolscheld — Moves (Selektion)
Mark Van Hoen — The Last Flowers From The Darkness (Touch)
People Like Us — Jumble Massive (Soleilmoon)
Günther Reznick — Stube (Odd Size)
Loren Merrell — Lifen Dewa (Side Effects)
Various — Great Jewish Music: Burt Bacharach (Tzadik)
Tom Recchion — Chaotica (Birdman)
Compiled by Nicola Catalano, Demos Records, Napoli, Italy

Depth Charge 15

Trans Am — Surrender To The Night (City Slang)
Dimitri From Paris — Dirty Larry Removes (Yellow Productions)
The Make Up — Alter Dark (Dischord)
Panasonic — Kulma (Blast First)
Various — Grooveland Presents Prototype (Prototype)
Ed Rush/Alice — Sector 3 (No U Turn)
Optical B — Bug (God Mountain Europe)
Kendall Turner Overdrive — Displaced Links (Parallel Series)
Various — Storm Of Drones (Sambert)
Laura Myro — Stoned Soul Picnic: Best Of... (Columbia)
Built To Spill — Perfect From Now On (City Slang)
Roupe — Entelechy (Resource)
Various — Return Of The DJ Vol 2 (Bomb)
Derrick May — Innovator (Sony Japan)
Roland Kaye — Teikra (Baboon)
Compiled by Gary, Depth Charge Records, York

15 More Incredibly Strange Records

Fiona Richmond — Franky Fiona (Paul Raymond Records)
Colditz, Breakpoint — WW2 Memories (Purple Records)
Prof Christian Barnard — Human Heart Transplant (Decca)

Charles Wuorinen — Time's Encomium (Nonesuch)
The 'New Musik' — Revelle (Musak Demonstration LP)
Truman — Alien Boogie (Universe Of Sound)
Hammer Presents 'Dracula' (EMI Studio 2 Quad)
Isao Tomita — Soundtrack: 1999 (Tam Records)
Alex Harvey — Presents 'The Loch Ness Monster' (K-Tel)
Dennis Smalley — The Pulses Of Time (WEA)
Various — Soundtrack: Gold (Mother Records)
Bruce Lee — My Way Of Kung-fu (Tam Records)
Sound And Light — Present Karnak Temples, A Tour (Sono Carro)
Sivananda School Of Yoga — Pathway To The Mind (Major Minor)
Oven — Music From The Film Fanny Hill (Canyon)
Compiled by Shane Quinter, The Garden Of Earthly Delights, Radio CPM, Milton Keynes, Prizes 1 Top-Tam

The Office Ambience

Hinaki Butoh — Collected Works 1995-96 (The New Sound)
Cecil Taylor — Nefertiti, The Beautiful One Has Come (Revenant)
Origin Unknown — The Speed Of Sound (Ram)
Workshop — Meguiresheng Xiang (Ladomat 2000)
Ralph Peterson Fo'Tet — Fo'Tet Plays Monk (Evidence)

Tipsey — Trip Tease (Asphodel)
Gent — Import/Export (Compost)
Shuts 'N' Springs 6 909 — Carrera (Cheap)
Lee Perry — Arkology (Island Jamaica)
Trilok Gurtu — The Glimpse (CMP)
Foday Musa Suso — Gnoss Of West Africa (Ellipsis)
Twisted Science — Cold Fusion EP (Leaf)
John Fahey — City Of Refuge (Tim/Kerr Import)
Various — Super Discount (Solid)
Alice Coltrane — Journey In Satchidananda (Impulse)
Compiled by The Wire Sound System

More Dodgy Group Names (Japan)

What A Small Faxed Head
Contagious Orgasm
Electric Pudding
The Dead Camels
Sunshine Super Sam
The Garlic Boys
Blood Thirsty Butchers
Wrench
Ultra Fuckers
Plania Organ
Mademoiselle Short Hair
Spasmom
Scandalous Box
Wild Hamper

All genuine Japanese group names compiled by The Traveller



The Garlic Boys

sound check

Underground, overground: April's selected CDs, albums and 12" s



Bushman: Tony Conrad
reviewed page 53

Meira Asher

Dissected
CRAMPED CRAM 034 03

When Israeli singer Meira Asher released *Dissected*, her debut album, in her native land, it created something of a stir. Well, it would. Containing dedications to the victims of the intifada, songs addressing AIDS, incest and feminine sexuality which are described in a text that is part original, part Biblical, it was clear that *Dissected* was aimed at a listenership who had, so far, resisted the siren call of MTV. Sung in a mixture of Hebrew, Arabic and English, Asher was stressing that here was an album intended for an audience more multinational than usual.

It's an audience which it well deserves. This is music which combines a driving force with delectable and sensual technique. Environmental noises such as breathing and water—even air raid sirens—create their own rhythms. In contrast, the instruments

have the ability to shape-shift themselves towards a more corporeal identity, the drone of a tamboura sounding, in one instance, almost like a set of lungs. Unsurprisingly, *Dissected* is a difficult record to categorise—it's certainly not in any folk tradition, although Asher uses a multi-ethnic instrumentation (didgeridoo, tablas, tamboura and Persian key flutes in addition to accordion, tape loops and various MIDI tracks) while vocal lines retain the cadences of Middle Eastern song.

In certain respects, this is an album which stands squarely at a crossroads: European, Middle Eastern, Indian, African textures and polyrhythms abound. They represent Asher's own background as a student of percussion and dance in Ghana and India. But there is also a palpable interest in non-rational genres: her resort takes in low-level Techno and ambiguous electronic divergences. There are numerous musicians working today who liberate their music with ethnic 'sit as a way of

dressing something that is intrinsically dull with a bit of glitter. There are fewer performers who are actively engaged in seeking a method by which several systems of sound may meet in creatively profitable terms. Asher is one. Although her cover picture appearance, shaven-headed and doe-eyed, may lead some to think they've discovered Tel Aviv's answer to Sinéad O'Connor, they'd be better off firing her next to Diamonds Girls.

LOUISE SPAT

Atari Teenage Riot

Sick To Death EP
DHR 95 9177 525 02/12

Panacea

Low Profile Darkness
OKHOME 9 CD

To us curmudgeonly old Electro Hippies fans, Hardcore denotes thrash. To bright young

Reviewed this month:

The Answering Machine

Solution Meira Asher Atari

Teenage Riot Masaki Batoh

Paban Das Baul & Sam Mills

Gregg Bendian's Interzone

Bevan/Frangenheim/Noble

Breakbeat Science 2 John Cage

DJ Cam Cluster Tony Conrad

Cube 40 Dead C Doctor

Nerve Experimental Audio

Research Faith: A Message

From The Spirits Fanatic Brian

Ferneyhough Frode Gjerstad

Bernhard Günter Gus Gus

Haco The Herbaliser Incursions

In Nihilum Indiscimination

Rules: Giya Kanchell Roland

Kayn Jack Kerouac Kuno

Land Of Baboon J Majk John

Player's Indo-Jazz Fusions

Microstona Meredith Monk

Nicolette Mirvane: Jungle Sky

IV Noise-Maker's Files Nuuk

Posso Panacea Paperclip

People Phantom City Public

Works Reg RLW The Roots

John Russell & Roger Turner

Ryuchi Sakamoto Thione Seck

The Shadow Ring Storm From

The East 2 Subterranean Hitz

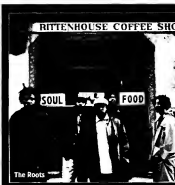
Taku Sugimoto Tipsy

Vandermark 5 DJ Wally Link

Wray John Zorn plus

Electronica and our rock

releases in brief



DJ Cam
Subliminos

THE ROOTS' DJ CAM ON THE RECORD

Fanatik

Seismic Activity

GOING FROM NATION TO NATION

The Roots

Blackish Halfride

THE ROOTS' DJ CAM ON THE RECORD

DJ Cam's debut LP contains what's the most raucous, hip-hop funk the Roots have concocted. "Mama" is as hip-hop forward as "Lousie" (a one-and-done vocal courtesy of a local rapper), "I've been told" takes on a funkier turn of Eric B & Rakim's "Paid in Full." Elsewhere, however, the album's influence on its uniformly impressive set of live performances can't be overplayed, particularly the double "So Good" (seven "breaks," as you'd expect) and "The Roots." The latter would be the outlier of the day here: "The Roots" is a live performance, and "Arista" (a live performance) is a studio recording. "Arista" (a live performance) is a studio recording. "Arista" (a live performance) is a studio recording.

God's Secret. It is, however, completely unrelentingly performed music. In that respect, it's the very antithesis of jazz. Hence the unnecessarily insouciant interludes that pepper the album. Cam doesn't want, however, if he lacks the pure musical brilliance embedded in the John Coltrane and Don Cherry roles that he manipulates to such gorgeous effect, he certainly shares their creator's quest for beauty on the sonic wings of their art.

Fanatik's music is similarly influenced by its native environment, but its inspiration is more purely geographical. In the year of the earthquake that's supposed to have taken the Bay Area of San Francisco into the bay itself, the sense of anxiety running through *Seismic Activity* is more tangible than the music itself. In that it's about layers of sound, the interplay between the front of the horns and the hidden treasures buried deeper goes, the music is impressive force. With Fanatik, however, everything seems to take place at the back of the mind, as if too much sound could actually trigger the Big One. Blurred soundscapes, conducted in images of sound, appear to be the best of the best, then, using sonic layers reflecting both geological and emotional uncertainty. Nothing stays in focus too long. Remembrance has no place here. This is *Seismic Activity*, power laid in its subtle disorientation and a welcome change from the genre's more common bucolic idyll.

A serious lack of swagger marks out the third album from The Roots' *The Roots*, albeit for different reasons. Ten years in the game and cited as an inspiration by such icons as Jay-Z, Dr. Dre, and Wu-Tang's Genius, they've earned their reputation as elite streetwise and groove. *Blackish Halfride* flows with the easy confidence of a classic funk record to prove. Always the most instantly of *Blackish Halfride* acts, their explosive on-off funk instrumentation makes for a more rounded sound than the heavy edges of today's digital models. The tracks move with a kind of rhythmic fluidity. While Kamel uses his keyboards honorably rather than actually creating layers as opposed to other edifiers, Black Thought's lyrical flow lines are also the most aptly fitting to such physically honed musical density, and the whole thing moves with the grace and confidence of a world-class athlete. In the pack behind long-ago

PETER MCINTYRE

Paban Das Baul & Sam Mills

Real Sugar

REAL WORLD PWRS CD

In 1968 in unlikely meeting took place between Sam Mills, ex-guitarist with 23 Skidoo, and Paban, a member of the Bauls, the sect of itinerant Bengali devotional musicians. Slowly, slowly, this album has emerged.

As a means of relating one system of sound to another, *Real Sugar* has nearly parallel, one of the most obvious being Nasir Fateh Ali Khan's collaborations with Canadian guitarist Michael Brook. But the music on *Real Sugar* has an altogether less refined atmosphere. Sensitively recorded, no doubt, it nevertheless seems more concerned with exotic surface textures than any deeper exploration of the material.

There's much that's inspiring about this package, such as an absence of any information about the Bauls, or about Paban's songs, let alone their meaning. Certainly there are legitimate arguments to counter this, even if transcriptions were provided, could any adequate meaning really be communicated? These are issues that continually appear in any context where "World Music" meets the West. Yet without them, the risk that records become vehicles for exotisms and little more are real ones.

Paban does have a light, sinuous voice, and whatever the lyrics of the album's nine songs may actually mean, he communicates a fusion of excitement. The accompanying music is Mills's responsibility: a mellow mélange of acoustic guitars, some waxy sound effects to heighten the mood, and minimal percussion. At its most unchallenging, it's grimly reminiscent of some folk drill out about Thailand really going with "God knows, no one wants to learn to master concrete all day long. However, Mills's Spanish guitar fills and Paban's mysterious trills aside, let's pretend that the album is of any real consequence.

LOUISE GRAY

Gregg Bendian's Intezone

Gregg Bendian's Intezone

GENIE PWRS CD

"It is our goal to expand the frontiers of contemporary popular music at the risk of being very unpopular." This laudable mission statement is to be found on the cover of the second *Genie* (Genie) album, released in 1971. Perhaps the awkward, John Porgy-style ring of the declaration hints at the group's future, unfortunately so, but you can be sure they're not making it just now; you appear they would become.

Persecuted Gregg Bendian has performed with some truly expensive (and "unpopular") musicians such as Cecil Taylor and Derek Bailey, but as a teenager he was struck by the

clubbers it means a darkened dancefloor. The rebel progeny of disco and punk-metal appear to have little to offer each other, but the two crust-crunching traditions come together in Digital Hardcore, and it sounds inevitable, a match made in technology heaven... or hell.

Take the coining of "Kick To Death" by Alan Tennant. Root DJ emcee grase Alex Empire with Hanni Blue and Carl Grosse, where a classic punk into boss with hip-hop trends. The parent genres have, after all, certain commonalities. Horary singers function as lyrics, shot through with self-righteous, heaving attitude. Melody and harmony are not at issue. Speed is the essence.

Of course, dub and its descendants have contributed DNA to Digital Hardcore, too, but there has always been something personal about dub. (The best cut here is ATR's

magnificent "Waves Of Disasters," which comes closest to dub.) Conversely, the strongest characteristics of Hardcore (any brand) are the inhuman qualities — the guttural, distorted vocals, deadhammer subtlety and boggling speed of attack, the mechanical repetition and relentless motion of Godfather Techno, where the BPM count is an index of appreciation. The beats per second in trash music together as an explosive surge, rising together in a few moments of adrenalin-soaked anticipation, repeatedly curtailed from kick-start again.

Though I tend to regard vocals as texture, rather than the carrier of messages, I like to know what music means. The overriding merit of much Thrash is its Goth-like political stance, strong on ecology and animal rights, arming humorized as Plague, Destroyer. I have little idea what Digital Hardcore is a genre is about,

and I strongly suspect I'd hate it if I did, but Empire and Martin Hoot (aka Panacea) seem to share that paradoxical attitude to technology. Hardcore is impossible without the machine, without urban battery-farm interminality, yet it rises against society and the system which facilitates it, locked, like Frankenstein's creature, into a toasting of its creator, of what shaped its beliefs and feelings. It uses the characteristics of the system to attack it with hard, brutal, angry, imitable music, that to essentials, then, ditching a few of those, too.

So did I like it? (Does that matter?) Well, I still prefer Skinny Puppy, but while the 70 minutes of scarcely-extended rhythm which defines *Love Profiteers* should really be 68 minutes too many, astonishingly it never boms

BARRY WITHERSON

compositional techniques of Gentle Giant and the album is his tribute to the group. It's a brave stab at rehabilitating near legends. Borden plays vibes, and glockenspiel, and Interzone boasts Neil Cline on guitar, Alex Cline on percussion and Mark Dresser on bass. Some of the writing is very strong, especially the swooning slide guitar theme of "Sunbaked Strife The Continent." But elsewhere the music can be introwarded and over-complicated, as on "Blood Season 21 Taut." In spite of the fateful combination of 70s rock guitar nastiness and Progressive whirly, you have to applaud Borden for the attempt. It's certainly a thicker, more musically soup than that offered by the Progger post-rockers. But if the vibes-soaked atmospheres sometimes recall Tortoise, there's nothing of the Chicago group's porous song structures, or their openness to the redemptive rhythmic foundations of dub. **File under:** oddities.

WILL HORTON/REMY

**Bevan/Frangenheim/
Noble**
Twinsters
SCARLETT 06.00

Scarlett records apply a distinctive aesthetic to the limitless possibilities of improvisation. Decades' choices about personnel and packaging lift the music out of the austere "documentary" mode that dominated in the 70s. Twinsters comes wrapped in silver "scorched" graphics by Owen Stefani-Boss: the metallic surface so unflinching you expect to leave marks when you open up the mley-card. The disc itself has been printed with transparent thumbprints. Act so sensitive it anticipates your spilling paint.

Alexander Frangenheim is a German bass player who has worked with Cecil Taylor and Butch Morris. His lowering bowed notes and clock-miked effects fuse with percussionist Steve Noble's subliminal metallic scrapes. This is real-time soundscaping, full of associations: passing trains, rusty machinery. When Tony Bevan plays (soprano and bass) it's fog-horns heard at night.

"Shifting Ways" is suitably illicit: criminal activities picked up on surveillance equipment. Bevan's trials take on an impersonal wave-wave quality, pushing the others into agitated response. On "Landfill" Frangenheim uses the extended string techniques Gidon Kremer supplied for Luigi Nono. Steve Noble's clock-making takes Stockhausen's experiments into gestural improvisation.

Such references are attempts to name sounds and procedures, not occupations of program. This is something new. Exploration of the furthest crannies of instrumental technique produces a concerted and moving soundtrack. The history of 20th century music has been the progressive understanding of the affective power of sheer noise. Twinsters is music straight from the dynamo.

BEA WATSON

John Cage
1 Two, Five And Seven
HAI ART 61 102 30.00

John Cage
The Piano Concertos
MODE 57.00

Two important releases that show the evolution of John Cage's thought over four decades. The two piano concertos date from the 1950s, when Cage had ceased making "serious" and begun making the "non-serious" for which he became famous. In 1951 he discovered the I Ching as a bible for chance composition. But the Concerto For Prepared Piano, composed in that year, uses an extension of his technique for the earlier prepared piano pieces, Sonatas And Interludes. Sound materials were consciously chosen but chance procedures determined the order they were used. The prepared piano is often compared to a gamelan orchestra — by which its meant its exotic, percussive and beguiling — and the piano part here is expressive, a quality not often found in later Cage, even though the orchestra is more static.

By the time of the Concert For Piano And Orchestra of 1957-68 — it's "Concert" not "Concerto" — there was a new side to his philosophy of non-intervention, of "letting sounds be themselves." Greater performer freedom meant that "chance indeterminism replaced chance determinism." Concert has no "master score", and the conductor's role is purely theatrical. Each player works through their part independently, without coordinating with others. This is the last part recording by avant-garde David Tudor — see Howard Skempton's article in the Wire 153 — here with the Ensemble Modern. The music is hard and percussive, often howling and screeching with microtonal glissandi and Tudor's live electronics.

From the 70s onwards, Cage returned to chance determinism. This was part of a general retreat which led to some of his greatest music — notably Ryoanji for cello and the Freeman Etudes. That's not true of the "number" pieces, though, which preserve some performer freedom. "Fountain", which appears on the Mode CD, is almost a concerto for "bowed piano" — the strings played with a bow. The Hai Art disc is made up entirely of number pieces, performed by the Ives Ensemble. The most beautiful, I reckon, is "No. 1" for violin and cello — Japanese bamboo pipes which produce sounds both inhaling and exhaling. (The number refers to the number of players involved), the superscript to the place of the work in the series of pieces for that number of players.) This explores pulsating sounds, whose duration is decided by the players, as in Morton Feldman's strange play. But "Sevier", for flute, clarinet, strings, piano and percussion, is altogether more abrasive.

The serene beauty of much of this music, and the remarkable tonal contrasts of the piano

RYKO OUT NOW ON RYKODISC AND GRAMA VISION



Ron Miles
Woman's Day
(Gramavision OCD 796161)

Since the release of his critically acclaimed Gramavision debut, *My Quest Heart*, Ron Miles has gained international recognition as an important voice on the trumpet and a strikingly original composer. Bill Frisell provides superb harmonic structures and inspired solos throughout *'Woman's Day'*. Ron Miles returns the favour in April when he will be touring Europe as a permanent member of Bill Frisell's Quartet.

"Miles has a deft touch at intertwining funk, swing and free jazz, mimicking melodies and layers of white-hot guitar riffs, boss wumps, and counter-melodies into haunting, personal music." THE BOSTON PHOENIX



"The Clusone Trio is a class act that captures the depth, range of moods and class of everyday life" - QJUDON

MEDESHI MARTIN & WOOD
Shack-man
OCD 79514

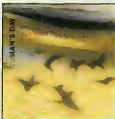
"These boys are stately of the NOW! Billy Martin draws up a statue in the spirit of Art's, neo-american Chir' Wood is cool, steady and Medeshi is simply a monst... there's a whole heap of creative energy at work here - order your copy today because Shack-man is smokin'!" - Straight No Chaser

MEDESHI MARTIN & WOOD
Bubblehouse
GC05 1001

In April NEWBY got the music featuring courtesy of RYKO DJ Logic and WE DJ Olive, Lono and Oona [1]. The DJ Logic remix of "Bubblehouse" features an auto synthesizer contribution from arch mavericks, John Zorn. The EP also features the previously unreleased track, "Macha".

Frank Zappa
Have I Offended Someone
(Rykodisc OCD 105771)

"HAVE I OFFENDED SOMEONE" is a "politically incorrect" collection of 15 Zappa favorites. Produced, arranged and compiled by J.Z. himself, prior to his death in 1993 (included for the first time are previously unreleased live versions of "Timeless Rebellion" and "Dumb All Over"). Potentially offended parties include men, women, Catholics, Jews, gays, musicians, male business executives, the religious right and the French!



Clusone
Love Henry
(Gramavision OCD 796171)

Marked by the critics as one of the most exciting jazz ensembles working today, the Amsterdam-based Clusone Trio display again their masterful musicianship on their new album, *Love Henry*. Recorded at last year's German Jazz Festival in Frankfurt, the Trio shift effortlessly between composed and improvised sections. Individually the Trio are all great virtuoso; as an ensemble, their interplay comes close to telepathy.



For a catalogue or more information, contact Rykodisc, (P.O. Box 1345, Haverhill, MA 01830, USA). Tel: 010 617 242-1234, e-mail: info@rykodisc.com web site: <http://www.rykodisc.com>

Cluster

Cluster I have 10 papers in 1980.



Upplysningar

LOOSE SWAY

concerts, should do a lot to convince sceptics about Cage (and that includes myself). It's significant, though, that Feldman, in many ways a Cage disciple, drew back from extreme indeterminacy because of the bizarre things performers were doing with his music. Many listeners still find Cage's philosophy of music too unsettling. Despite his almost life-long challenge, Art, and the intention that goes with it, proves almost inescapable.

ANDY HAMILTON

Tony Conrad

Four Violins (1964)
TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS 130-131

Despite the title of the Tony Conrad/Faust collaboration from 1972, this 1964 recording represented Conrad's first real adventures outside the Dream Syndicate, the LaBorne Young-led "group" which also included John Cale. He asks in the liner notes, "Why were there no other solo recordings of Dream Music for strings? Because I always saw this music as inhabiting a communal ground, even Four Violins seemed like a gesture that should remain personal, as it has for over 30 years."

So why release it now? For so long Minimalist history has been a story of the 'big four' (Young, Riley, Glass, Reich) in his book *Minimalists*, K. Robert Schwarz manages to describe the development of the Dream Syndicate without a single reference to Conrad's vital influence. This seems a ludicrous and unforgivable omission considering the music was a continual mention, that increasingly began to rely on

Impressario and drone-combination. The problem lies in LaFontaine Young's steadfast refusal to allow the release of any of the Syncretists' tapes. In an act that's completely contrary to the spirit of the project, he won't even allow Conrad access to the tapes unless he signs a statement assigning all rights to Young as the "composer." It's a sorry end to a musical adventure which had initially set out to destroy the "authoritarian trappings of composition", dispensing with scores and notations in favour of cassette recordings of performances, introducing unusual note-intervals, and ideas of rhythm as an aspect of pitch to create a music both alien and ecstatic — a music which would open out your ears.

So now Conrad is rewriting the history of Minimalism from scratch with a series of releases on Table Of The Elements. This is his second complete solo release. The first, *Stopping Pythagoras*, was like a rumination on the 'Harmony of the Spheres', the ancient concept that proclaimed a grand cosmic harmony which was inherent in everything, from the relative distance of the planets to, eventually, the tempered

Western score. Conrad sees the groundings of an ideological form of social control in this, an injunction to "harmonize with your culture." Basing his note intervals on the prime numbers three and seven rather than the modern Western three and five, Conrad attacked a cultural rupture and set out to forge a new musical language no longer at the service of such widely abstract concerns, an affirmative music capable of direct soul-speech where "almost minimalist pliant changes would become gliding streams across the surface of sound."

The most striking quality of *Four Violins* is its instant familiarity: the grating sound of the violin parts impart a vision of a uniquely American dissonance, the feel of a continent, its a quality also present in the spaces surrounding John Fahey's or Loren Mazzacane's rattled notes, the early Sun recordings, the compositions of Charles Ives, the righteous soul-breath of Albert Ayler. With *Four Violins* Conrad moves closer to sound-science, to ringing out, the notes which have always existed in the skies of America. The joy comes from connecting with Conrad's language, from following its own logic — like railroads roaring out into the Midwest.

It's a landmark recording in every sense, and the fact that this is only the first of many forthcoming Conrad installments from TOTE makes me feel like howling with joy.

DAVID H. FREEMAN

Cube 40

Cube 40
BOJCE INC. HILSIC WORKS RM 117 219

Various Artists

Indiscrimination

How many albums do Jammer, Uha and Khan put out in the course of a month? Granted, *Indiscretion Rules* is a compilation of mostly old releases on Jammer Uha's Pharma label, but these are the fourth and fifth albums that these guys have been responsible for this year, and, at the time of writing, it's only February. Even Phlemaute can't keep up.

The Dead C

Reprint
SL 74452 5866 CD

The Shadow Ring

Wax-Work Editions
CORPUS HERMIT CUM HERES 019 CD

While it would be a lie to say that the kids have been carrying outleaved HIV demanding more product, new Dead C material has been much anticipated for some time. Now, at last, in the form of a primer for their forthcoming studio album *Tusk* (it's hot, we've got Reprint, a limited edition live recording from God knows where. All the Dead C trademarks are present: "process" made apparent (tape runs out, guitars cut in, audience members mutter, some guy claps), guitars not so much played as glared at or locked (feedback time-hows riffs stuffed upon), cardboard box production values (Luncheon has it that they actually went their amps inside cardboard boxes before mixing them up). Certainly, the level of (non)fidelity on this disc is informed by the aesthetic that runs through all of their projects. It's an anti-skills-at-corporate stance which manifests itself in primitive hand-made packages, limited-run litho-cut 7"s and Free-Noise manifestos — the fullest realisation of punk. Via two guitars, drums and a truly non-nonsense approach to improvisation they summon up demonic belches of electric sparks, their dual guitar attack carrying all the weight and immediacy of the greatest rock. There's no mistaking their aim of expanding rock's vocabulary. Alongside a host of other New Zealand luminaries (Gale, Riet Inside The Sun, Trash-Sanitize, Les Technicians, A Headful Of Dust), they're heaving rock music from rhythmic constraints (Robbie Years on drums often sounds like he's playing lead, not that the guitarists may claim any heed), just to watch it take off.

In his spare-time David C. Malcolm Bruce Russell runs the Corpus Hermeticum label, dedicated to faithful documentation of the extreme end of the international underground. The label follows up as phenomenal *Pying Saviour Attack CD* with another British entry, this time from The Shadow Ring. Often compared to Simon Wickham-Smith and

Richard Youngs (indeed, Youngs guests on one track alongside a mysteriously uncredited from Lucille — not enough notes, perhaps?), they wield a similar between/and/or but comparisons really and there. There's not the same breadth of expression, the same emotional depth, the same genuine outsider atmosphere — sometimes they veer dangerously close to cynical underground-by-numbers moves, halfheartedly pursuing all the right buttons. However, their all-acoustic (Sometimes Cases) adduced banging and rumble occasionally hits the mark, especially when accompanied by Darren Harris's low-4-or-loath-it Home Courses monotone. Interested parties should check out their *Seltanneum album Put The Music In Its Cofin* first. **DAVID KIDMAN**

Doctor Nerve

Every Screaming Ear
CUNYING RELEASE 88 CD

"I could only survive the first two thirds," wrote American magazine *Newsday* about *Every Screaming Ear*. Sounds hard-heard, but two thirds of the way through this 50 minute, 20 track opus — round about the time of "They Were As If They Also Which Perced Him", in fact — questions of how the listener might preserve himself against the mentally ravaging music become imperative. The material is quite superb, it's just that it demands total listening commitment.

Doctor Nerve are a New York based group and have been going for 12 years. This is their sixth album. Conversely for many they are recorded in a number of live shows and encompasses compositions from throughout their Mesopotamian. Guitarist and composer Nick Dokosky is the leader of the octet, which consists of bass, guitar, drums, vibes and a colossal four piece horn section (including bass clarinet, a horn by default). The music is dense (jazzcore) between neo-Funk guitar of the pros. But the group's signature is the proliferation of perverse, atonal horn lines, giving a spectacular effect that's the mark somewhere between James Chance's No Wave freeform naivety, Zappa's incoherent writing and a flourish of Stravinsky's *Ebony* Concertos.

The reason the record is so taxing lies in its almost total lack of sensuality. First angular surfaces and restless playing predominate, with all melodies, arrangement and perspective. The composition is rigorous, but the excellent live recording gives a flavour of what must have been fantastic shows. And the reward for getting to the end is an inspired cover of Captain Beebeater's lugubrious "When It Blossoms Its Staccato", which is part arrangement, part derangement. **NINE BARNES**

Experimental Audio Research

The Kinetor Experiment
PILLE PLATAURE 1936 CDLP

EAR is Sonic Boom (Spaceism 31, Eddie Privetz (APPS), Kevin Martin (God, Techno Animal, Schneider) and Shields (Phy Bloody Valentine) joined by Thomas Koner and Andy Melving for mixing and, as the insert has it, "rhythms and pulses".

The sounds of *The Kinetor Experiment* are generated by means as simple as pipes, as sophisticated as synthesizers, as obvious as breathing, as oblique as bowed cylinders. Identification of the sound source is impossible most of the time, pointless always. If there is a strong flavour of 50s radiofonics rather than 90s technofonics, this speaks of *EAR*'s individuality, ingenuity and adventurousness. Pared down to simple, regular, restrained rhythms, eventually introducing restricted angular, subliminal fragments of proto-melody, sustained background tones, this is equivalent organised sound that displays a stark beauty. Like some ambiguously delineated submarine (form a cocoon), polka-dots — undulates — all limits too violent to accurately describe the process, and, for most of the time, process is too definite a concept: this music doesn't do, doesn't become, it just is. It occasionally, it seems to be travelling somewhere, as path proves to be a Moebius strip.

The ten phases of the experiment emerge, exist for a few minutes, then ebb away. They are like slices of time from parallel existences, alternative instants rather than successive

events. If development supposes change, antithesis, synthesis and supersession, there is little or nothing which would pass for development in this music. But development can also encompass unfolding and revelation. Either way this is an utterly compelling album. Entirely abstract, yet the insistent, softly percussive patterns frequently suggest audible pictures in the fire, from native Australian chant to the horn of your boob. Built (or cut) from pulsations which are overlaid, overlapped and counterpointed, each track is an emanation from some eroded but never revealed source, a variation on an electroacoustic origami. **BARRY WITHERIDGE**

Brian Fennelough

Fourth Strain Quartet And Other Works
AUNDS NOMADIC 10 783239 CD

Brian Fennelough is the "fang over the water", the British leader of New Complexity forced to live in Germany while his compositions are rarely heard in his native land. Rejecting postmodernism, he continues the project of Boomer-style modernism by other means. The label *New Complexity* may be unsatisfactory, but in Fennelough's case it conveys the unprecedented, in that desperate, virtuosity the composer calls for. This is music which glances in complexity almost for its own sake.

Words may be poor tools for conveying what music is like, but you get more than a flavour of Fennelough's from his own writings. Here he is in full flow, in Paul Griffiths *New Sounds, New Personalities*. "In the face of the high level of stylistic plurality [today] the term 'style' itself needs to be seen as an essentially disorienting function — that is to say the composer needs to pursue the goal of a slowly developing, auto-organic linguistic usage capable of providing for some equally gradual semantic enrichment of musical vocabularies which only some form of historically linear perspective would seem to afford".

To be fair, it's not just a matter of using ten notes where one will do. Fennelough's interest is in exploring the limits of players'

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Carl Craig

Paperclip People

The Secret Tapes Of Dr Eich

MINISTRY OF SOUND (SPIN 003) CD, LP

Carl Craig's best music has always had a rough edge to it. Compare his disappointing 1995 *Longcrusing* LP, which was smooth almost to the point of sterility, with any of the work produced under the 69 imprint. His Paperclip People identity takes the raw, lo-fi mentality even further.

A collection of previously released material, plus two or three new tracks, this is music that celebrates the hedonism of dance culture. Bedded down on homemade, ragged beats and enormous basslines, tracks such as "Throw" and "Floor" envelop you in a Bacchanalian swirl of synthesised pleasure, harking back to the days when dance music was a more simplistic (yet not necessarily more simple) matter. That's not to deny the immense artistic talent at work here. Craig's technical invention has always been apparent, here perhaps typified by "Oscillator", where he constructs a melody from pitch shifts as opposed to mere notes. Yet what makes him one of the greats is his intuition: his ability to 'know' when things should happen. "The Clinic" begins in an uncomfortable mélange of damped down beats and percussion frantically straining to reach escape velocity, a simple synth riff, inserted seemingly from nowhere, contextualises these disparate elements and creates a perfectly unified groove. It's a moment that's breathtaking in its audacity, yet obviously right the moment you hear it.

This unified theory of the groove is what gives *The Secret Tapes...* its infectious power. Yet there are darker forces at work, ghosting forth in this particular disco machine. The opening track, "Welcome Center", with its sampled conversations that speak of death and pain, seems in stark contrast to the sheer joy of what follows. But austere, melancholy synths give way to "Clear And Present's" rhythmic rush, while the ebullient solo that takes flight in "Steam" is clearly at odds with the trickiest electronics below, wheezing towards decay and collapse. The modern equivalent, perhaps, of fiddling while Rome burns, expect to hear these tracks in all their glory at the party at the end of the millennium.

PETER MCINTYRE

potential, and The Avants Quartet, who perform the Fourth String Quartet here, have reported that he's happiest when they try for feel at the expense of accuracy. The piece is modelled on a classic of Old Complexity Schoenberg's Second Quartet. The presence of a soprano echoes that famous work, whose "ar from another player" was a metaphor for the advent of anarchy. The singer here is bad news, though especially given the minimal

semantic enrichment of her musical vocalises "deconstructionists" of Ezra Pound's *Poem*. "Control. But maybe I'm prejudiced. I didn't something go wrong with singing techniques in the 18th century, only corrected in the age of the microphone?"

The solo guitar piece "Kurze Schatten II" is the last piece by Ferneyhough I've actually liked, rather than admired. It's brilliantly performed by Magnus Andersson. The

scattered, fractured lines can be explosively virtuosic, despite familiar avant-garde effects such as legging or thumping the keyboard. "Trio for GS" for solo double bass, is almost equally extreme. On "Terror", a kind of violin concerto, three Avids plays with his customary phenomenal virtuosity. A great duochrome disc.

ANDY HAMILTON

Frode Gjerstad/William Parker/Rashid Bakr

Seeing New York From The Ear

CADENCE 1427 CAR 1068 CD

Frode Gjerstad/John Stevens/Kent Carter

Last Detail: Live At Cafe Sting

LADANCE 1427 CAR 1068 CD

John Stevens & Frode Gjerstad

Sunshine

PERCUL PIP CD 104203 CD

Frode Gjerstad is a Norwegian saxophonist who made his mark with the Circulassone Totale Orchestra and by playing alongside the late drummer John Stevens as part of his fluctuating Detail project. These three CDs illustrate Gjerstad's strengths as a player and improviser, together with some of his weaknesses. *Seeing New York From The Ear* is a title that's presumably nodding in the direction of ESP-Disk's *New York Eye And Ear* Control by Albert Ayler. Don Cherry et al. teams him with bass player William Parker and drummer Rashid Bakr, both ex-Cat Taylor sidemen, joining up a storm at New York's Knitting Factory in '96. Here Gjerstad sounds slightly overwhelmed by the company he has chosen to make music with, and overcompensates for his nervousness by playing loud and (too) long while Parker and Bakr skate pointedly around him. When they finally elbow their way to the front, however, the mood changes dramatically and real improvisation takes hold. Parker in particular is brilliant. A player who makes his music sound effortless. As one point he draws the trio together with a stripped-down bassline that produces a tantalising thrust of freeform minimalism. It's a magic moment, a beautiful flash of inspiration that unhappily collapses into another box of ill-forgotten collages from Gjerstad's past-dicked solo.

Gjerstad's final date with Detail, a group he contributed to successfully right up to leader/drummer John Stevens's untimely death, is a much cooler affair. This one the trio of Gjerstad, Stevens and bass player Kent Carter knit together and bounce ideas around, sounding as though they are enjoying each other's company rather than sweating it out in a fever of isolated confusion as if law that dominates Gjerstad's playing on the previous disc. *Last Detail* is a fine way to bow out.

Sunshine features Gjerstad and Stevens in an almost duo version of Detail, a powerful

and tender performance from two comrades which builds and eventually explodes with pure inspired passion, as both players strive to produce new sounds from their respective instruments. Despite the occasional discordant shriek from his corner, Sunshine is yet another example of the awesome creative energy that Stevens loved to share with others, and one more reason to mourn his passing.

EDWIN POUNCEY

Gus Gus

Polyclustortoon

4AD 040 7005 CD, CASSETTE

If I told you Gus Gus were a me-me-piece Icelandic multimedia collective, I'd fully understand you skipping to the next review, but wait — suppress those expectations of stoned leg-entrancy and sprawling pretension and take the risk of listening. What you'll find is a delight — an erratic but frequently irresistible collection that surfs rockably between disco, House, Ambient, Swagbark and, best of all, a kind of mutated swamp-delta Techno R&B where cowbells shaggle down with computers and Dr John's late '60s hoodoo shamanism robs sagely and wickedly in Underworld's general direction.

Gus Gus have three vocalists, but their music works best when the voices are simply one thread in the weave. "Early (White Pindr)" sets a somewhat distraught hi-NRG falsetto against a numbing subterranean House bassline to considerable effect, while the bawky, looping funk of "Polystandard" conjures up a vision of Gellerson or James Brown stripped of their awesome West London choruses, but I confess beautiful ignorance of their existence). Best of all is the silky waltz "Believe", which nips a beat coned from Jaki's Swag-like classic "Don't Walk Away".

On an album this varied, where it feels like well-intentioned bohemian democracy failed to weed out the runts, there are inevitable misfires. "Whyy?" and "Je Jesus Your Da?" invest too strongly in the literal vocalising of the only female singer, Halls Hudd. But when it works it's like arriving at a party where they're playing Can. Don Park, Exile On Main Street and the two or three bearable records. *Drum Scream* made. This isn't remote or difficult music, organic and assured. It's not afraid of pop hooks and it seems to have been made by people who smile as they dance. Not one for all you bowing polytheists, then, but warm-blooded creatures may enmesh with confidence.

ANDY PRODHUM

Haco

Haco
R&R PEGASUS R&R HACO 1 CD

Japanese singer Haco is a true original — like a weightless astronaut on the floats in her own anti-gravity pop soundworld, shot through

with a very female dadaist/avant-garde spirit. Like her companion, the drum machine virtuoso Ikuo Hara, Haco has clear, light sounds, a lot of space and open-minded kinds of structure. On the album of 11 songs the music is sparsely fleshed out by a series of guests: electronic percussion from Sammi Benicoff and Peter Høllinger, and the excellent cello of Tom Cora. There are other echoes of experimental rock — Fred Frith gets a thank you and Chris Carter handles the UK release — but this music is kept at arm's length while Haco pursues her own undisturbed agenda. Alongside the cello, for example, she places a couple of pianos tuned in odd temperaments, and sings of Hens who had bull bearings built into their half-transparent body.

Haco is a cult artist in Japan because of her 80s group After Dinner. Two of her strengths are her clear and expressive voice, and her long for lyrical hards "Yuuze" as "yuuze", with an "excellent" word and "Mushroom, I'm home!" Good as the record is, Haco is not always best served by the slightly unimpressive production. Live at the LMC Festival last year, Haco singlehandedly carried the socks off the audience, and a cunning producer could maybe get more of that personality onto the record. Having said that, the album ends with "O! And Water", a beautiful flowing melody like an Okinawan folk song, as soon as it finished I wanted to float right up to the top again.

CLIVE BELL

Giya Kancheli

Caris Mero
BN 1168 CD

Of course, ECM's smash hit (if one can use such an idiomatic phrase) which pitted The Hilliard Ensemble against saxophonist Jan Garbarek. Surely the only way to read it, was proof-positive that Holy Minimalism is more about life than death. Certainly it's about music, too, and no doubt many will see Goro Mero, which includes Garbarek on one CD ("Night Prayers"), as a conscious attempt to reproduce the former record's sales figures. This would be a shame, as the disc stands alone as a testament to Kancheli's disjunctive inspiration, one of the better packages of his music to appear recently.

"Night Prayers" is the hardest and most austere of the three pieces, and as such is less disjunctive. It is expertly handled orchestral modernism in brooding solitude, but for that reason it loses some of the composer's individual fingerprints. Garbarek, for the first time, plays notes more, save for one three minute improvisation which, to be honest, sounds exactly like the written stuff.

The title cut ("Indecency again") is a typically perverse word-setting (Hokkaido, the gospels of Saints Luke and Mark) done with admirable concision for solo voice and the ever reliable voice of Kim Kashkashian, who must have the most ravishing, sweet-toned and expressive viola sound in the world. All this is

aided (or once) by Manfred Eichler's spacious recording, which invests the singer and violist with body and warmth without losing sight of the piece's ascetic severity.

But if one new here should rightfully emulate Officium's success, it's "Hidaiya Prayers". This is a fairly telegraphic stuff — schizoid contrasts of exclusive textures in the brass and weeping-willow intonation in the low strings, but it's the ferocity with which Kancheli handles soft, low sonorities in the woodwind (without ever resorting to kuchi) which marks this out as something for soundtrackers everywhere. If Kancheli's rhetoric is too honeyed — too much son-of-Shostakovich sound and fury — his handling of the orchestra as a feminine conductor is all his own work.

PAUL STUMP

Roland Kaye

Tekira (1980-1982)
BAGGAGE BOW 016 CD

"Ordinary Sunday music", commented a passing friend while I was listening to this release, reflecting on the music's sense of hovering over the contour of a changing landscape. But the terrain covered is perhaps in areas yet untraversed. This has the feel of space music, or of endless film of a barren moonscape.

In the 50s and 60s Roland Kaye had an interest in applying information theory to music, as well as applying methods similar to those of Cage, Stockhausen and serialism. A brief stint with Gruppo Nuoovo d'Informazione Nuova Consapevolezza (an avant garde ensemble that numbered Ennio Morricone among its members) opened him up to the freedom of improvisation. He went on to develop a theory of "polyrhythmic music", a music from which the composer was as far as possible removed. The music was to be a self-regulating system, the composer's role being to set the parameters, wind it up and watch it go.

So if these electronic pieces communicate the chill of Kubrick's Hal, that's entirely appropriate. The music is generated by a complex network that responds to the sounds it receives, if that sounds like a recipe for chaos, well it isn't, because the controls are so tight. The works are long, slowly evolving streams of sound that resonate around certain pitches but have no relation whatsoever to conventional rhythm, melody or harmony. Fascinating microtonal intervals separate the tones as they rub along beside each other. Curiously, the music also has great warmth; it's easy to listen to but it certainly isn't easy listening. The parallel with Cage is interesting: the indeterminacy even alongside a high degree of preliminary control, but what evolves is of more than conceptual interest to the average listener — I found it hard to take the thing off the CD player. Further, while the use of sustained tones is usually presented as primordial, organic, deeply human, these space age drones are weightless and future-

facing. It's highly seductive, with immense detail, careening pitchbends and a kind of nonchalant tranquility in the way the music emulates the pace of human agency in music making.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Kumo

Kazuo Kamekura
PSYCHOPATH PROJECT CDZLP

J Majik

Slow Motion
HFA AND HFA/NOI CDZLP

Multi-instrumentalist and engineer Jono Podmore's debut Kumo LP is a triumph over all ambition than reinvention. Incorporating such instruments as the theremin and the koto into the breakfast matrix undoubtedly serves to broaden its scope, but certainly in the case of the former, it does nothing to progress the music as such. Drum 'n' bass seems to work best when it has a singular purpose and follows its own internalised logic. Podmore seems to make it an all-encompassing genre, capable of pulling into a unified whole elements as disparate as jazz piano, atom samples, analog sawtooth electronics and crashing melodies ("I Hear Dharma"). Perhaps it's his way of compensating for a lack of the kind of dizzying rhythmic complexity mastered by Phileas or Dillinger. Whatever the reason, it's a catch-all approach that comes across as a little too self-satisfied for its own good.

Podmore is more successful when employing his engineering skills on the preformatted drum 'n' bass sound. On tracks such as "Kralien Hikes" and "Tigerstyle" he adds an extra dimension to a series of otherwise ordinary rhythm patterns by filtering them in and out of clarity, moving across the frequency spectrum from recessed bass rumbles to a marginally over-extended treble.

Teenage wonderkid Jamie Hayward, aka J Majik, takes a different approach from Podmore. He goes for breadth rather than depth, viewing the breakfast as a spectrum and ranging across it freely. "Stealth" is a testament to the disruptive power of the break, its low and frequencies resonating in a subsonic ambient, as the beats replicate in subtle but infinite variants, circling rather than progressing, gradually folding in on themselves. "Organised Crime" is even more harmonious, as shards of hydraulic digital and the delicate fabric of vaporous trip-hop textures, commanding the accepted/expected rhythmic orders. "Hermaad", conversely, reveals the beauty to be found in the space between the beats: languorous ripples of sound undulate out from some uncharted point in the mix, ever decelerating into infinity.

Slow Motion is a journey across a remarkable range of styles, but Hayward displays a maturity way beyond his years.

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Viewing each piece in isolation and ignoring the details of continuity, he produces a series of drum 'n' bass that is gloriously misar yet more expansive than an outwardly more ambitious record like *Karnen*.

PETER MAXTHER

John Mayer's Indo-Jazz Fusions

Asian Arts
SERVUS 14499 CD

In 1965 John Mayer and composer John Mayer was introduced to the London-based, Jamaican-born alto saxophonist, Joe Harriott in the hope that the two would collaborate on a fusion of jazz and Indian classical styles. Thus was born the original Indo-Jazz project which spawned three albums between 1966-68 and many live performances (the group continued to perform until Harriott's death in 1973). Although other jazz musicians such as Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy and Tony Scott had previously experimented with non-Western modal structures, the Mayer-Harriott Double Quartet was one of the first to integrate jazz and Indian musicians (though as early as 1961) and Ravi Shankar had recorded improvisations with a similarly mixed group of US jazz and Indian classical musicians. Unlike Harriott's controversial early 60s "freeform jazz", which saw the birth of free jazz/hip improvisation in Britain and probably Europe, Indo-Jazz proved to be an instant success. Remember, George Harrison had begun using a star on *The Beatles' Rubber Soul* in 1965 and would strike up a well-publicised friendship with Ravi Shankar the following year. Indo-Jazz was an idea very much in tune with the time. Tragically, the master laps of the Harriott-Mayer Indo-Jazz albums (and Harriott's freeform albums) currently gather dust in the archives of Polygram who, for reasons best known to themselves, are unwilling to release this remarkable material on CD. Fortunately, copies of the original vinyl LPs fetch hefty prices on the collectors' market and are among the most sought-after in British jazz.

For this new group Mayer has gathered together nine young musicians who might well be students at the Birmingham (UK) Conservatoire, where he is resident composer and Professor of Composition. As well as several new Mayer compositions they take on three from the Mayer-Harriott days — "Hedge", "Song Before Sunrise" and the extremely catchy "Mur". Components are plentiful. While the raw live-in-the-studio versions are pleasant enough, they're nothing special, lacking the collective verve and individual personality of the original line-ups. There's no one here to match seasoned axes like Harriott and Shakti Kano, or the elegant Kenny Wheeler and gripping sitarist Owen Harriott. Nimbis's lacklustre recording doesn't do the newcomers any favours, either. Microphones are badly situated for such music, taking the shine off potentially inebriant instrumental

John Russell & Roger Turner

Birdhouses
TUNE-IT 1000 CD

What if you heard right into the brain, registering the mechanical reproduction of kinetic energies and twisting shadowlike glimmers into a million shiny pieces? That's what Russell (guitar) and Turner (percussion) do. The ideology of technical progress too often places a single-minded emphasis on hardware and forgets to listen. You can use banks of equipment and still end up with the humdrum swarms of Mainstream (a mistake made by Rick Wakeman and, more recently, Experiment! Audio Research).

Russell and Turner play acoustic instruments, but this release works because it uses digital recording, and the CD medium. It proves that live improvisation was ahead of its time in its conviction that silence and inaudible textures had a place right next to explosive thunder and deathwails. Analogous recording and fragile vinyl simply couldn't create all the music's dynamics (as the many records on the now-collectable Band label attest). Improvisations by Russell and Turner are well shared. They are organic, electrical, sensitive to the interest of sound. Their looking after can to minute detail and microscopic interaction has produced a truly special art. Now a technology and economic infrastructure has arisen that can close-focus on this art and produce astonishing artifacts.

And this is an astonishing record. Total concentration on the role of listening on the ear in real-time achieves a combination of over-arching structure and the consequences of improvisation. This music arises out of the same drive to articulate the hidden glories of the material that led abstract painters to abandon representation as such, a mere trick better performed by photography. Birdhouses is the audio equivalent to the world-blazing painters and droids and stars of *Allegory*, John and William De Kooning. Mayer's final analysis: the light-arm status that some



John Russell

musicians aspire to — the voracious legibility of grand pianos and double basses. Such low-gloss material restricts the vocal palette. Russell and Turner will have none of that. They are children of their times' allegorical age; with blues and jazz and pop and modernity and even, during things, Roger Turner likes to declare his allegiance to Big Sir Cohen. His jazz rock grooves his wide-hip beats and his hip can take the case in steps that sound like the evolution of soul waters from a clogged drain (this may come from years of performing out-of-control Phil Manzanera). John Russell breaks down physical cues, produces electron-spectrum music, so on and so forth.

Proof that it takes feeling, deduction, in good, with the net.

BEN WATSON

colour "Asian Arts" is the pick of the new band, with some vibrant piano from Steve Trombers. But as a concept Indo-Jazz has had its day. The ambitious eclecticism of 70s World Jazz, especially on ECM, broadened its horizons, making a 90s return to Indo-Jazz appear rather nostalgic. Nevertheless, if Asian Arts raises awareness of those 60s Mayer-Harriott albums, then it will have performed an invaluable role.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Microtasia

Reproducers
PHILIP ALTAIR HP 37 02/29

Over the last couple of years the phrase "remix project" has begun to acquire the sort of tarnished weight enjoyed by "supergroup" in the mid-70s. Microtasia — the German duo comprising Jan S. Wiermer of *Heide* on Piers and David's Marlon Popp — have chosen their sonic surrogates wisely, however, and

Reproducers restores some badly needed lustre to a discredited activity. It's an idiosyncratic and intensely focused collection, brimming over with timeless, tactile noise and pools of deep, redemptive silence.

Just like Microtasia originals provide the raw material for the 11 tracks here — which means that themes and tones recur in various modified states during the 71 minute playing time, providing a barely-tingible coherence which unites the approaches of the members. Some tracks are structured vertically — gathering sound into shimmering gales — and some horizontally, drifting through modulating acoustic spaces, but the overall effect is one of unified and highly distinctive purpose.

It stitches together fragments from all five tracks on the brilliant (and stereoidally-titled) "Run" / "Jolly Well Won't Run" / "I'll Be Happy To Get You: Chapeau Avenue Ball", and supplement them with a dizzying range of found and recorded sound: a banjo flutters, indeterminate flurries of bass-range white noise. It's a collage in the finest tradition of *The Power of Two*.

weaving from the lyrical to the impenetrable, from the seemingly random to the steady of purpose. When the basslines become more "Western" — slurred blue notes, aching spaces — the track mutates into a word, fractured take on one of Ry Cooder's cinematic desert fantasies.

Violent Omen Gesha are more intuitive still — their track is never at rest, flitting past Geger counter clicks and a Bruce La Parris in a distant room. Poppers chart the penitently agonised nudges. There's an impetuous burst of TV theme funk, and New Age chord noise. As the record unfolds, the fragments become less identifiable, evading assimilation, description even. With the exception of Stereoblast's lay French doo-wop (pop, overt melodies are this on the ground. For a moment Jim O'Rourke flourishes the memory of Pearls Before Swann's sumptuous Landlady sounding the Chagall of the Light Brigade, but it's quickly overrun by restless clock ticks and sweeter tones. Generally, Reproducers speaks of — and to — a musical generation as influenced by the

noise of 2881 computer programs recorded on cash-and-carry C60 cassettes. fluid, curiously emotional and perceptually evocative, it makes for uncommonly stimulating listening, and deserves to be recognized as a triumphant entry in its own right. For to be left languishing in the discarded corner reserved for superior remixes would be unjust in the extreme.

CHRIS SHARP

Meredith Monk

Volcano Songs

ECN NEW SERIES 1589 CD

The singer and composer Meredith Monk is frequently grouped with Minimalists such as Philip Glass and Terry Riley. Yet her working methods—even for large-scale pieces—seem closer to those of a dancer choreographer, getting close collaborators to learn her music by ear rather than filling acres of manuscript paper with dots. A refreshing approach for an American composer in her thirties.

"Power," "Three Heavens And Heirs" (1992), the outstanding work of the album, was written out—originally as a piece for teenage girls to sing. Unlike Monk's more customary wordless pieces, this score is based upon a text. Monk sets the simple words (by an 11 year old girl) for a quartet of female voices. Starting with plain tunes, plainly sung, she stranges them in canon and then a series of increasingly intense transformations, including much vocal percussion and noise over its 21 minute stretch. There's an echo of middle-period, operatic Glass, here, and I was also reminded of the remarkable improvisations of Hange Nicols and Julie Toppet. Producer Tina Piekman and Jan Erik Kongsfug, ECM's star hiring engineer, put the four voices across the stereo image with great clarity.

The remainder of Volcano Songs features some very exposed wordless vocal solos and duos, and the low point is the 11 minute "New York Requiem" for voice and piano. Much as I admire Monk as a composer—her music is mature and well-conceived, and displays a strong, consistent personality—I find her performing style and voice hard to take. An accused teardrop. Fortunately "St Petersburg Waltz", the lone instrumental piece, is a treat, a low-key but well-constructed piano piece performed by Nurt Tilles (of the great piano duo, Double Image).

JOHN L. WALTERS

Nicolette

DJ Kicks
STUDIO KT INT 707.005.2 200

DJ mix albums may be common enough these days, but ones mixed by non-DJs aren't. So the initial interest in Nicolette's DJ Kicks is her approach to the genre. Will the former Messia Attack singer go for the seamless

splicing of melodic landscapes, or the freewheeling of breakbeat structures? And how, as song is her prime métier, will she deal with vocals? In fact, it's an eclectic mixture from beginning to end. Assisted in the production by Plastik Ed Handley and Andy Turner, she has assembled disparate works as her source material: transsexed hardcore from Shout, digital noise generators from Aphex Twin and the requisite arsenal of drum 'n' bass provided by the likes of Doc Scott, CJ Boland and Don Zay. The odd elements come from (or all people) Mike Flowers's wordlessly pastiche pop, while it's Nicolette herself who provides the album's most arresting moments, speaking stanzas of verse at certain junctures and combining a new recording of "All Day", a minimally-accompanied song in which her voice moves through a strange and straggled ambience to a position of strength. This is music constructed from the spliced sources, shards of synthetic sound welded into a new identity. It's noticeable that Nicolette lets what songs there are on the album alone, allowing them their own integrity. One wonders if it's because her cyberjog landscape requires a seal of its own. Whatever, this is an intriguing foray into the heart of contemporary dance music.

LOUISE GRAY

Noise-Maker's Fifes

Public Frontation

TWIN TUB AND DENVER TAB COOT CD

Noise-Impro is currently enjoying a fertile period with soundtracks from Ambient and Industrial music increasingly absorbing an improvisatory approach in their search for brave new soundworlds. The boundaries between these genres become ever more blurred, complicated by the fact that musicians now use a similar array of electronic sound-processors and sampling devices in their instrumentation. There has also been a noticeable rise in the number of such groups using live instruments. The attraction is obvious: Pick up a saxophone or a guitar and you pick up several decades' worth of historical baggage, too. Invent an instrument and you start anew, no tradition of prescribed playing techniques to adopt or shun off, an immediate sense of establishing one's own idiosyncratic voice.

Brussels-based Noise-Maker's Fifes typify this particular blurring of genres. Public Frontation, their fourth album since 1991, is a collection of live improvisations recorded in Belgium, Holland and Germany. Live electronics intermingle with invented instruments given such tactile names as 'stringed iron', 'iron insect', 'bubble cymbal', 'spring chair' and 'musical table'. They've collaborated with Morphogenesis and textural similarities between the groups spring to mind, so too with David Jockman's Organum. "Baltho House Part Two" and "Improvisation (Ancient Ocean)" are particularly memorable nebulous drones are foregrounded by percussion

effects and sinewy strings. Throughout, atmosphere is carefully developed and sustained, while microtonal detail is finely etched on to the expansive canvas.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Phantom City

Shiva Record

VISION AMICI CD

Thrilling, articulate bits notes throbb with a loose-limbed groove. An Echoed trumpet shouts angrily. Bass darts arabesques bel and out of a swirling electronic loop. Everybody solos, no one solos. Yes, we're being sucked into that black hole known as jazz rock, the colourful, open-ended questions of Miles Davis's *Silent Way* and *Pitches Bowed* and branded for too quickly into full-packed "music".

But Shiva Record is a brand new album I have a theory that the optimum time gap for an effective revival is a generation—25 years or so. The traditional (or revived) jazz movement was a 1950s phenomenon, 25 years after Louis Armstrong and Eddie Condon. In the 1970s, many of my college contemporaries were exploring top and the cool school for the first time, and the 1980s saw a sharply focused revival of Blue Note jazz all over the place (including these pages)

So, let me check the calendar. Yes, it's 1997, it must be time for a resurrection of any 1970s electric jazz, played (as revivals often are) with a little more consistency and technical skill than many pioneers managed at the time.

One surprise in Phantom City's mostly excellent example of the genre is that the prime mover is Paul Schütz. It's known as a prolific, studio-bound sound designer who churns out albums as if tomorrow had already arrived. For this live concert, recorded in November 1996 at the Tampere Jazz Happening in Finland, his fellow musicians were Bill Laswell (bass), Rauli Bjoerkeheim (guitar, ex-Krakatau), Toshiron Kondo (trumpet), Alex Buess (bass drum) and Dirk Wachter (drums, also a member of Pöytä's Eye). Schütz contributed live electronics and a backing track that acts as a chart for the two performances. "Black Data Parts 1 & 2" There are no tunes, no extended solos, and you can't dance to it, but there is plenty of interest from the interaction of the improvisers, the wide range of instrumental timbres and the structure and sound supplied by Schütz, who at one point whips up an electronic storm that evokes Landscapes's Chris Hovenden in his pulsating, ring-modulating *Hybrid Land* you'd know, wouldn't you, John?—Edd

Shiva Record prompted me to dig out and listen to a couple of its distinguished

Taku Sugimoto

My Italian Museum (I or Electric Cuirat)

Masaki Batoh

Collected Works, 1961b, 1962c.



Masaki Nishio engraved

TONY HEDDINGTON

innocence: Markus Stoichau's 1995 *Possible World*, a similar brew with more verity but no grooves, and Herbie Hancock's *Crossings*, a work of towering genius. The latter album's juxtaposition of high-calibre improvisation with Patrick Gleeson's synthesizers was a triumph of 1972 studio technology — Phantom City's barge of modern, user-friendly gear can make it happen on stage. True, *Shiva Rascal* has some of the longbeats that are difficult to avoid in an honest live recording (and I wouldn't claim it to be in Crossings's class), but there are enough good moments to justify a bit of excited hype (the press release reads more like a rave review from The Wire).

I like Phantom City Queue here for the electro-jazz reveal

JOHN L. WALTERS

Public Works

Music With Sound

STAMP/PLANT SITE/092 ID

Public Works

Matter

STAALPLAAT STEC 113 CD

With the debate on sampling still raging in major record company offices around the world, along come two recordings to imitate the legal sian once more. Though not entirely new — *Music With Sound* was originally released in Canada in 1991 — these works contribute to the minefield of ownership.

copyright, the unregistered, and the hacker mentality where ideas and their consequences are not ownable.

Previously working under the name The Tape Bees, and now curiously called Public Works, the members, Uloyd Dunn and Ralph Johnson, stake a claim to all received culture as it's most consummate in order to tear it apart and re-integrate it into a new context. With scissors poised, or possibly a cursor on the screen, they cut and paste sound into our receiving ear to enact their critical commentary on countermedia knowledge (Dunn used to edit the publications *Yawn* and *Detraction*).

For this listener, who has owned the Music Men Sound CD since its release and used it consistently in DJ sets and to demonstrate the inventiveness and imagination of sampling, the first album is still the most potent of the lot: it retains a freshness and quirkiness that Matter fails to capture. Many listeners will recognise the opening chords of 'Beautiful Soul' from Old Joe shows and recordings, or the familiar chords and melody of 'Eleonor Rigby' creeping into a track. The skeneesters rate a desire to make machines 'speak alumnus', and the duo's condensed use of spoken texts has arguably had a profound effect on artists as diverse as Coldcut and People Like Us.

Mutter opens with "Substance", an elegiac piece with computerised voice and Arvo Part drifting gently in the background, but continues with rather too much focus on post-Industrial rhythm samples. A Laibach

instrumental B-side used as a backing track, for example, lacks the rawness of the first album, where less is most certainly more.

Slicing themselves into our plagiarist culture, where every art form affects the next, and where recorded history can be interpreted as a catalogue to be sampled, and making no attempt to manipulate and treat stolen moments, Public Works attempt to 'capture and reproduce' truth in all its definition, clarity, and brilliance! Filled alongside recordings by Niggavind and John Oswald, books by Stewart Home and Kathy Acker, and a Pro-Walshman, Public Works CDs are essential objects for any modern plagiator.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Reg

One

SONET RECORDS BRASSIC 3 CD/P

DI Wally

Genetic Flap

LIQUID SCY-HET-12

The Herbaliser

Blow Your Headphones

MILWAUKEE JUNE 22ND 2011

Nauk Pousse

Contact

SUN 005A SPRING

One is nostalgia. Reg, a solo artist near the end of his twenties, turns his imitation with

at things: HiTop sound, the dirty breaks and the old school sounds, into something of its own, trying to find meaning in his sense of loss at the disappearance of early 80s rap culture. This is Grandmaster Flash coming on early VB, an Old School battle tape retrieved from the back of a cupboard, scratchy breaks played on wobbly decks, pause button loops and a faded magazine article on Spoonie Gee. It's old and grainy music from Brighton, a long-standing HiTop outpost cherishing a music that's starting to be forgotten. The devotion is charming, the execution forged with a sadness that only its absence

The American DJ Wally on the other hand is something new, or so he may think. In fact this album is a sub-standard approximation of the UK word-bass scene, conceived with more of the angst or devotion that usually fuels such sounds. Genesis/Flex covers the full range of styles, from Ambient dub to J bass circa 1995 to fast-fused, instrumental Alpha, but Wally's own tracks are only a little better than right: compared to late-minded Americans there is none of the liberation of DJ Spooky's acid-garde work or the power of the Wordboard labels' investigation into new strains of dub. There are some interesting moments that draw on the back catalogue early 80s Electro pop, but sampling Paul Simon's *Hoards* "The 50th St Bridge Song" and calling tracks "The Blowjob Series: Day One" and "The Blowjob Series: Between Him and America" states that this is very uncool indeed. The Herbi-fare, however, is a very cool name. This South London duo's second album

goes deeper into the jazz HiP-hop groove that characterised their early work. It's pleasant without being memorable, chiefly head-nodding stuff apart from the exuberant "Griger Jumps The Fence", a chemical funk moment undoubtedly inspired by the Ninja Tune/Swain nights at London's Blue Note club (at which The Herbaliser often played) On Blow Your Headphones, the duo do what many weed-beat groups secretly dream of and employ some MCs to become a 'real' HiP-hop group. Unfortunately the rappers fail to rise above the average. Why doesn't anyone ever give Jazzy The Damage a call? And now for some HiP-hop from us, Greenland. As usual when it's a new overseas, HiP-hop is used as a tool with which to underpin and reinforce national identity. Maoris in New Zealand, Koreans in Japan, black South Africans and Arabs in France have all utilised the power of HiP-hop to make themselves heard in a country where they feel neglected or ruled over. In this case it's young Greenlanders 'rebelling against the Danes, who, complain the Greenlanders, too often overshadow them. They write of the mood signs in Danish' illustrates one particular source of frustration. The music rolls from samurai Tropic to Public Enemy-style agit acts, using sold breaks and displaying admirably sophisticated production. The sound is as cold and stark as you might expect from a country that spends much of the year in complete darkness and covered in snow.

JAMIE BARNES

RLW

Splitlover

TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS GED3 CD

Bernhard Günter

Un Peu De Neige Salle

TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS GAG1 CD

RLW

Splitlover

BLACK ROSE BROS 996 1005 CD

But is it Art? Or is it music? Two questions, prompted by apparently loud and soft voices, by two of the oddest balls in the noise ballroom.

Music that is as unashamedly difficult to listen to as that made by Ralf Wothowky (RLW) and Bernhard Günter (Pullover, despite its billing, is a collaboration between the two) almost wilfully courts misinterpretation and incomprehension. This music says to your ears, "I'll take you on if you think you're hard enough". But Frankfurt School aesthetics (Adorno and co) have at least been given an overdue and vital hearing by these fearless flame-carriers of bruised abstraction.

The collaboration is by far the most successful of the three records. Wothowky's soundscaping, if determinedly non-literal, allows and expounds of bestial sound, efforts the listener not to identify sound with anything except itself, and perhaps the best

way of doing this is to listen to the music while in another room. The CD ceases to become a record and mutates into ambient noise, albeit vaguely disturbing and intensive ambient noise. Günter, meanwhile, provides the near-silent rumbles in between — the calm before the storm, or at least, before intensive showers. Wothowky is at his most dissonant on *Splitlover*, particularly the final track, "Silence Revealed (Parts 1-3)". This formidable piece erupts eventually into Godzilla-size space rock eruptions, perhaps this is what Krautrock would have sounded like if they could have time-sloped 50s technology back to 1970. Günter, meanwhile, with his soundscapes of some waste, hissing and blessing on the way through the void, is really little more than a fairly diverting curiosity. He's undoubtedly a clever guy who deserves serious appraisal, the music's most memorable moments come from sounds which seem to evolve out of the silence itself, let with no audible source.

Is there anything here we haven't heard before? Such questions are red flags to any avant gardist, but I've yet to hear an adequate response. Frankfurt School-inspired post-serialists may claim that originality is always possible, but when someone like this writer crys out their refuge is always a technician's didactic pomposity: "Ah, but it hasn't been done this way before." If art and music are that which transcends the anonymous — and Stockhausen, Feldman and all the avatars of post-serialism did indeed transcend the anonymous — then these records, often far from intentions may be fine, but their execution is just another cut-of-sock. The music, like most of the music in this field, is, for this poor fool anyway, becoming all-too-anonymous.

PAUL STUMP

Ryuichi Sakamoto

Smoochoo

NUJIA 4321 440 072 CD

No introduction needed. Sakamoto is a co-founder of Yellow Magic Orchestra, purveyors of technopop to the global village, and has been involved in high profile soundtracks for Ben Hur, collaborations with various famous people on screen and in studio (Bowie, Madonna, David Sylvian, Peter Gabriel), Olympic theme tunes, and two solo albums, first in 1996, and now this, whose title apparently translates into, "I'm a losing mood". All the work has been characterised by Sakamoto's attention to detail, to tradition, to innovation and, last but not least, a stunning, ineffable boredom.

This might seem a little unkind. After all, Sakamoto and his YMO colleagues have pioneered aspects of late 80s dance music and contributed sounds for manufactured dreamscapes which were, well, fun. And he has a capacity for synthesis, as *Smoochoo* shows. In this collection of 13 songs and instrumentals, Sakamoto romps through pieces which are influenced by many sources:



LEO RECORDS

Music for the inquiring mind and the passionate heart

LEO LAB

LEO RECORDS LABORATORY MARCH 1997



LEO LAB CD 028 PSALMS & ELEGIES
AARDVARK JAZZ ORCHESTRA

This is the second CD by the Aardvark Jazz Orchestra on Leo Lab. The orchestra is being led by the composer/pianist/harpist Mark Henney. The music is deeply spiritual, for it speaks about life, people, experiences, joys, sorrow, etc. Three out of four long pieces are elegies for specific people, the fourth one moves from elegiac towards the epic. Duration is over 75 minutes.



LEO LAB CD 029 HOW MANY?
NATSUKI TAMURA — Trumpet,
SATOKO FUJII — piano.

Natsuki Tamura and Satoko Fujii are Japanese living in New York. They've been playing together for over ten years. In their music they create a musical world filled with form and feeling, serenity and surprise, and each piece of their music achieves its own special character. The CD consists of 14 pieces, duration is about 65 minutes. liner notes by Stuart Bloomer.



LEO LAB CD 030 > LO <
UWE OSBERG — piano, GEORG WOLF — bass, JONG FISCHER — drums

The trio was founded in 1994 with the intention of playing pulsating, earthy music as well as soar up in spheres of choice fragility. The title of the CD suggests zen's imago ("Lo! The mountain flows across the water"), and the music really flows with integrity and conviction creating the atmospheric wholeness. There are 8 pieces on the CD, duration is over 60 minutes.



LEO LAB CD 031 ORCA
COLLECTIVE 4tet

"Collective 4tet" is Heinz Gresser — drums, Mark Henney — piano, Jeff Hoyer — trombone, and William Parker — bass. This is their second CD on Leo Lab, the first one, *Repertoire*, received some outstanding reviews. Collective 4tet is destined to become a super group. As Ben Webster writes in his liner notes, which this group plays "the history of jazz is still being made". There are seven pieces on the CD, duration is 71'50.



LEO LAB CD 032 CARLOS BECHEGAS
PROJECTS

Carlos Bechegas is a Portuguese flutist who explores sounds with the help of electronics. Part of his CD has been recorded with his trio (K243), the second half is his solo with electronics. Both alone and with his group he plays "structured improvisations" trying to find and develop his own voice on his instrument. There are eleven pieces on the CD, duration is 75'55.

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Juliana Hatfield

Various Artists

Jack Kerouac. Kicks Joy Darkness

TIM OWEN

Bizakis! In *Amor, bosque nudo*, the soundtrack to Vincenzo's death in Venice, Miles Davis, some Portishead-esque dirty beats ("Poise"), an extraordinary track, inspired by "the sea, the trops, whistling and the feeling of optimism," sounds like a kazoo-wuzzoo version of the theme from *Star Trek*. It's an eddy wrought record, a mixture of evocative cocktail jazz and a 50s Easy Listening album. One expects Martin Dennis's insane orchestra to burst into (bird) song, and by the end you're actually wishing for it. The best moments come when Sakamoto concentrates on the fundamentals: there are some pleasing arrangements for piano and strings, but their taste is soon lost. This is an album of gleaming, polished surfaces with all the depth of a bad pasche.

LOOSE GRAY

Thione Seck

Dealy

STERN-AFRICA STUDIO CO.

There's Sekou, the gentleman dancer, the mellow mystic of Senegalese music, who floats his yearning grip exotemporations over the hot and hypocritical miltail of his group Raïm Daïm. His 1984 cassette *Dangompo* was a classic in its vein. Chouffeur B is probably the best over-zealous of World traditional music, a form discreetly modernised in 1994's *Derni* to hipnotic effect. A significant body of work then, insufficiently known in the West. So it is curious that Sekou should choose to put out what is probably Sekou's worst album to date.

It would be absurd to tell someone who has been as influenced by Indian film music, Dolly Parton and classic French chanson as his own guitar tradition, that he would have been better off with a plangent Serengeti woman's chorus than the broathy would-be-sophisticates used here, or that cocktail piano and guitar traditions don't go. But the use of these elements on the ponderous title track is in orange-making poor taste. The rest of the album is polite, standard-issue mobilis, enjoyably fun in parts, but the synthesizer and horn arrangements too often lead into a metric banality that is likely to turn Westerners off.

The CD is beefed up by tracks from 1989's excellent *Now*, whose smooth Persian arrangements retain the complexity of the music, but inevitably sound slightly dated. The saving grace is the shaping, aching wail that mimes the 'Andalusian' tone. At his best, as on 'Gazdaye', Seick can sing up a drama that carries all before it.

FLANK WOUNDS

Tipsy

Trip Tease: The Seductive Sounds Of Tipsey
ASAP/DPEL 0967 CD

Welcome to the seductive (wink, wink) world of Topsy from San Francisco. Camp stays

from a trumpet section punctuate the dreamy-listening guitar melody, over a gentle Latin drum loop — yes, it's EasyHop perfect music to accompany that period of staring at red curtains before the cinema programme begins.

Tim Degussa and David J. Gardner are Tippy, and they have delved deep into their mood music collection to bring back a wealth of kooky samples: it's a quirkfest of organ melodies, vibraphones and bongo drums shimmering around the palm-fingered dancefloor. They also add the contributions of 12 musicians, but it's cunningly assembled so you can't easily see the join between live playing and pilfered material.

The result is Easy Listening collaged and reorganised for 90s taste, with the same abysmal upbeat emotional impact as the original genre. Not so much a comment on it, or a total reworking like *Orgen Transplants* by Stock, Hansen & Walkman, more an attempt to recreate the same wide-eyed feelings of teeniness. And very successful it is, too.

The original 50s music was enjoyed in the shadow of the bomb, and Tip Tones's tactic track is a mid-tempo Hawaiian ditty called "O Bomba Atomico". Now things are smaller and more personal — we live in the shadow of our mobile phone bills. Packaged in a seductive cardboard sleeve, Tip Tones is a surtable object of desire. If there is a dark side to this music, it's well hidden behind the Dialon seal.

CLIVE WALK

The Vandermark 5

Single Piece Flow

ANALYTICAL MPN CD

Raucous bar-room freebop from Ken Vandermark and associates of the late, great Hal Russell and his NRG Ensemble. The leader plays tenor sax and clarinet, and this line-up recreates NRG with Vandermark playing Prince Hal — reedsman Mars Williams and bassist Kent Kessler were also prominent members of that outfit.

Multi-style, multi-instrumentalist
Vandermark leads a variety of Chicago-based groups, from a standards quartet to three improv ensembles. But *Single Piece Flow* features a less eclectic range of material than Russell's Ensemble, concentrating on the high-energy end of the spectrum with a time-no-changes approach. With a couple of reflective exceptions, all the tracks have a pent-up force that emerges from the tight ensemble and driving rhythms, and Vandermark's wheeling/dealing power-play explodes into the frame from the start of track one.

"We're banking it all on the hope that authenticity will make a comeback within our lifetimes." That statement of intent from the Através label (Label Lore, *The Wire* 157) is reflected in the rory-free commitment of *Single Piece Flow*. The composers — all by Vandermark — are dedicated to a series of mostly jazz luminaries, including drummer

Alan Dawson, Elton's eldest Johnny Hodges, and DJ Evans. A rare pause for reflection is "Renee", a single-line theme where Hans Williams and Vandenberg engage in diatonic counterpoint.

There's a broadside trombone from Job Bishop, who also doubles on tin-jazz-like guitar. The week list, it's a decision, is drummer Tim Mulvany. For all his power and fearlessness, there's maybe a slappiness in his playing that indicates a less than perfect time-feel. But this is relative to the greatest of contemporary drummers and in the context of a very fine group indeed. Recommended.

ANDY KAPILTON

Various Artists

The Answering Machine Solution
STAMPALP! SPD 100 CD

Answering machine messages often give us an impression of people we've never met or let us know how friends and acquaintances wish to present themselves to the public sphere. They come in various genres — clipped efficiency, over-eager bonhomie and laboured wackiness probably occupy the answering phone 30 three chart — and if you regularly ditch those hateful people who leave the machine on all the bloody time (like me), their message can become a hideously familiar mimicry, even breath and intonation in imperceptible-gathering obscurity. Worst of all are those pre-recorded official messages, which pretend to offer you a choice of options but always end up subjugating you to The Blue Danube or some kitsch digital Mozart. Indeed, there's probably a thesis to be written on the connection between the 'on-hold' music modern citizens are forced to absorb and the otherwise inexplicable popularity of Robert Miles.

This CD, the 100th release from the Dutch Skeletohead label, poses an alternative — dozens of fragments, jokes, songs, insults and sheer noise offered as replacements for the standard factory message. The guiding aesthetic is prioritizing disruption: imagine someone calling you to be greeted with a miniature film soundtrack, a woman reaching orgasm, some Velvet Underground-style drinking, a slab of percussive alien seemingly escaped from Uncle Meat, or a twanging prospector announcing, "I can't come to the phone right now because I'm spreading the word of Jesus." Listening to the whole album in one grip (and with 66 tracks in 41 minutes there's no likelihood of getting bored) is like scanning a radio dial to bask in the joys of randomness, or looking out of a train window as endless back gardeners disclose the idiosyncrasies of their owners.

It would be ridiculous to select favourite tracks, but then the ridiculousness of the particular form of communication is the real focus of the album's play, so let's single out Kingdom Scurfs' "The Ultimate Generic Answering Machine Message", wherein an Ethel Merman soundalike celebrates her

purchasing power by mindlessly belting, "I've got an answering machine", BNE's "Steve", which greets callers with incoherent underlining their sexual prowess, and Ivo's absurdly wonderful "LYM 1057", a chorus of imitating multitracked psychotic Smurfs. The latter is the one that's most nearly made it onto the machine in our house, but it probably won't get there, just in case it scares off people calling to offer work or pass on serious news. Like all avant garde work, this album is more of a utopian fantasy, a briefly delicious what-if, than a viable option in real-world daily life. Even so, it's a superbly irresponsible intervention.

ANDY KAPILTON

Various Artists

Broadcast Science 2
VOLUME SEVEN 2002/CD/MLP

Various Artists

Nirvana: Jungle Sky IV
LUDUS JSP 2515 CDLP

Various Artists

Storm From The East 2
MOVING SHADOWS 2002/CD/MLP

The second edition of Volume's Broadcast Science drum 'n' bass overview goes some way towards fixing the problems that marred the first compilation, but not invariably far enough. The first disc displays the same shortcomings: a distressing lack of compelling beats, a formal rigidity, and a reliance on an atmosphere in the absence of attitude. After a dull Kick Loops track, though, the second disc picks up with a shockingly good T-Power cut in which his trademark Industrial sounds and Techno textures finally converge on the Masonic dystopia of his nightmares. There's also the motivational "Plastic Baggies" by The Advocate complete with steam-roller sub-bass and calligraphic drums, the high concept ethnography of The Underwolves' "Milk", which is based around a ramshackle, folkloric rhythm, and the stark "Kala" by J Maja, which shifts perspectives between street and hyper-tension like a Wong Kar Wai film noir. The highlight, though, is the magnificent "Bass Of The Tramp" by Aphrodite (who's this guy gonna get his due?) and Mickey Finn. An excruciatingly funky workout on a classic Hip-hop organ break, "Bass Of The Tramp" is reminiscent of a time when the accelerated Hip-hop breaks of tracks like 4 Hero's "The Kirk's Nightmare" and DHR's "Vengeance" seemed to presage a brand new world.

Drum 'n' bass is a brave new bag in the States and is still running on the adolescent enthusiasm of its core fanbase of 15 year olds who are way too hip for their own good. Unfortunately, most of the producers who contributed to Nirvana: Jungle Sky IV have failed to succumb to the infectiousness of bass energy. There are some useful sounds to be found on the record (most notably Soul Singer's star and Nasrati Faah Al Khan out-

ings and DJ Ann's athena), but the ponderously long intros and weak-to-weak beats cancel their effectiveness. Surprisingly, one of the best tracks is from Ina-Mat & Origin (aka Marcus Gilmore and Cleveland Watson). "The Bag" is convoluted neo-fusion and its incoherence makes it far more interesting than their wretched Project 23 material. Also standing out among the starched leaves is Tube's "All Natural", which veers from unsettling string obnoxious airt breakbeats to full throttle Techno spin-out.

Where *Jungle Sky IV* makes drum 'n' bass a bit too eclectic, *Storm From The East 2* takes the funk by creating something akin to chamber *Jungle*. Full of saccharine flute riffs and drum breaks which are as cloyed and unwelcome as Steve Gadd, this is generally ultra-conservative, hipper-styled music with the soul of Grover Washington Jr and the head of Tom Scott. Some tracks manage to rise above the sameness and communicate on a more challenging, evocative level (there are noteworthy studio chops and interesting noises on display on PPR's "The Eleventh Hour", Hyper-On Experience's "Steered Breeze" and Toking's reggae-ah "True"), but the baseline on Rhynox's "Dover: Swing" has been treated to the point where it now sounds accusatory, but "Gravitational Pull" by JMU neatly sums up the vibe, sounding like an Akeo Reese remake of an early Thelma Houston song.

PETER SHAPRO

Various Artists

Faith: A Message From The Spirit
JAZZ RECORDS FEB 30 CD

"I'm sorry Aphrodite, I'm sorry Pope — we're godless," to quote the Bing Selfish song. We are indeed godless, and maybe one sign of godlessness is an interest in those colourful religions found all over the world that seem culturally so much richer than sad old mainstream Christianity. Faith is a coffee-table companion of far-fung religious beliefs, and the main problem is that a third of its message 45 minutes isn't music at all. The Koran recited (recorded off a jiddi) and the Torah recited in Jerusalem are pretty odd, and Western Christianity is represented by a series of predictably idiosyncratic evangelists — it leaves you feeling sorry for Christians, if this is the best they can do.

Getting down to actual musical content, the tracks from Tziki in Georgia are very worthwhile — male church choirs lead a thrilling harmonic journey from key to key. Only four or five voices are involved, but this stars the saint. From Tibet, 300 Buddhist monks at prayer set up a chaotic a cappella. Like a hypnotized doo-wop group, it is possible that European monastics once sounded like this? A good idea is the inclusion of beautiful bells from a church in Jerusalem. And there are examples of complex drumming groups from the Afro-Cuban-Spanish region and from Tibetan Voodoo.

The compilation, leaving aside the naïf

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travelogue lars, is a good taster for the curious. Academic it ain't—there are no maps or photos, and a minimum of musical information, but there is an essay giving an introduction to each religion. The record will be judged on musical grounds, and while there is some strong material, there's a dum-dum in the conchaling—particularly the surprisingly short recording of a brass band stuck in traffic in Kathmandu. Goddess we may be, but we deserve more than one and a half minutes of this riotous street music.

CLIVE BELL

Various Artists

The III St. Presents Subterranean Hits Vol 1
WORMEAD WSCD014 CD

Various Artists

Incursons In Illiberty
KSWHCD 0964 CD

Various Artists

Land Of Baboon: An Illibetric Collection Of Brooklyn Sounds
KSWHCD 0967 CD

The attention span of a set of traffic lights, that is the quality required according to *The Guardians*, and they should know, to appreciate the 90-minute of downtempo beat collage. This particular piece of blinding critical insight was made in reference to the 'Ho' War label's *Discoursions* compilation (not a great record, as it happens), but I suspect that any one of these three records from New York's Illiberty/Crooklyn dub community, and particularly *Subterranean Hits*, would have generated a similar response. Once the beats start rolling on many of these 40 tracks the event horizon has indeed crossed over into moribund territory, but like a Martin Feldman chamber work, what incidents there are assume formidable levels of gravitas.

Rather than short attention spans, the kind of minimalist instrumental HipHop that dominates *Subterranean Hits* demands of the listener's superhuman levels of concentration. On Rob Swift's "X-Dread", DJing Brown's "Head Spins" or Scooby Hansen's "Bulger on Tobacco" the lack of foregrounded events draws you deep into the music's recessed complexities: the specific decay pattern of a reverb-enhanced rimshot, the harmonic ambiguities that arise out of overlapping samples, the sudden shifts in air pressure caused by modulating bass frequencies. There is a further tendency to dismiss such insulated studio oddities on the basis that they neglect the social dimensions of the HipHop culture from which they emerge, which is about as useful as drawing unfavourable comparisons between Pirelli Ubu and Eddie Cochran.

Incursons in *Illiberty*, which has been on release for ages, feels like a showcase for the mobile movers and shakers of the illiberty alliance. The tracks by Sub Dub and Byar are

shot through with strobing synths that shift the mood but fail to break the fourwheeled forward motion of the real-time dubs. On DJ Speedy's "Soon Forward" and Wu's "Jehnu" "lulu", machine beats throb through translucent electromagnetic cloudheads. This is music that has had all the air punched out of it. The tracks feel weighed down with Gotham grim, exhaustive and exhausting in their claustrophobic accumulation of detail.

The Land Of Baboon set, compiled by Wordsound label affiliate Professor Shabaz, is more diffuse. "Survival Sounds" "Dub Is Dub" makes the connection between reverb and funk's use of the wah-wah pedal as instruments of reconfiguration, running the same kind of voodoo Lee Perry applied to The Congos' *Heart Of The Congos*. Dr. Israel's "Residence Dup" is music as sonic time travel, emerging dubs' renegade styles and hi-fis into broadcast complexity. "The Question Of Consciousness" and "Beware Of Confusion", collaborations between Shabaz and Captain Kowlich, lay piano noodlings over rudimentary drum patterns, while "Fable From Arabian Nights" splits the action between a smattering of a North African medina and the afro echo soundings of Sun Ra's *Cosmic Jones For Mental Therapy*.

None of these records carry the kind of heavyweight theorising which accompanied the *Axem label's* complementary *Axored Beats* collection. Even the *Wordsound* release arrives mainly the kind of tenets, all urban voodoo and snake-of-prophecy, favoured by label boss Sak Fadz. No matter. At the risk of sounding like all critical faculties have disappeared in a cloud of dope smoke, the music speaks for itself. If you accept it on its own terms, it will give up its own peculiar treasures.

TONY HARRINGTON

Link Wray

Shadownman
ACC 01838 CD

Link Wray is a name to conjure with. Taught guitar by a local black bluesman named Harbome, he defined 60s punk guitar with his instruments (apocryphal in *mindful*). "Rumber", "Run Chicksen Run", "Ace Of Spades" and "The Belman Theme". The throbbing menace of his music says everything about why distorted electric guitars are great and normal society is wrong. Since the gentrification of 'rock' by all the Stings and Dave Stevens, the true rockabilly flame has been pushed out to the margins (The Cramps, Iggy, The Pinnbacks, Ascension, Shannon Houghton). When Quentin Tarantino made *Pulp Fiction* he called in someone who could personify his trash aesthetic: Link Wray's career was resurrected.

This release is no cash-in on the part of Acc Records. The label has long been a closet of obsessional rock consciousness. It was issuing Link Wray records back in the 80s. An incredibly young-looking 67 year old, the

veteran flew in to record with Eric Grooves (bass) and Rob Louwers (drums). The two all wore dark glasses and used the vintage Valmorel recording studio (licensed by rock punks throughout Camden Town). The tape quality is above the 10-4 aberration of Wray's 50s recordings, but the non-digital tonance is gorgeous nonetheless. Real rock 'n' roll and plunk sound add up to a Ramones feel. Lacking the holey, psychotic nerve of yore, the widescreen production-values have a seductive, immersive effect.

On "Young Love" Wray is unfortunately gripped by the urge to sing a ballad. His vocals don't move the musicians and the beat begins to plod. When Reeves plays Vox organ for "Hoped Baby" things liven up, and you're back in the garage feel. The unaccompanied "I Can't Help It If I'm Still In Love With You" was probably a mistake, but it's great when "Night Provler" slims in. Maybe the textual contrast was needed.

If they'd got Charlie Harper in on vocals, this record could have been a classic.

SEN WATSON

John Zorn

Filmworks 3 (1990-1995)
EVA 39066 CD

John Zorn

Filmworks 5: Tears Of Ecstasy
EVA 39067 CD

John Zorn

Filmworks 6 (1996)
EVA 39068 CD

One of the inescapable pleasures of Zorn (and one of the efforts sometimes required to get hold of his product) is that the pulse-quacking discovery of a new title, then the badgearing of spool-to-shots and weighing mail order imports, until one day the discovery of a single disc in stock—from Japan, a snip at \$25! *Filmworks 3* is one of those. Costly and hard to find (though for how long?) Zorn fans will nevertheless find it worth shelling out for. Its earliest piece, from 1988, is "Music For Taurus", a short integrated sequence of music cues for animation tests by Kinko Kubo. As Zorn explains in his sleeve notes, Taurus features many of the same musicians, instrumentalists, chord sequences and the musical theme of *General Hysteria Hour*, a 1989 Zorn/Kubo CD which remained in print in Japan for an entire week, the Zorn fan's holy relic. The disc ends with 31 brief "spots" out for the advertising industry and directors including David Cronenberg and Jean-Luc Godard. Many of these pieces, recorded on Zorn's own one-take, take-it-or-leave-it terms, feature the spiky twang of guitarist Robert Quine among an irregular army of New York improvisers. Quine puts in a further cameo on a moody 1993 film score for "Thieves Canyon", which otherwise constitutes the debut recording of the group now known as *Musado*. Arguably the highlight

of this essential collection is "Holywood Hotel", a luscious 1994 all-nighter duet with Mark Ribot which is humorous, awe-inspiring, sugged-out and weird. Serious fun.

If you can't find *Filmworks 3*, or if you can't move it, it's a shame, because it's one of the series' other plenty of compensation. *Filmworks 5* contains a single soundtrack of 48 short pieces (mostly under two minutes) for *Tears Of Ecstasy* by Japanese New Wave director Osamu Hiroque. You probably won't be hearing this one in your local multiplex, or even even home. As Zorn explains, "The story is a real charmer: a family of swells comes down to Earth and spends all their time hearing and sex." The quartet features Quine, Mark Ribot and Brazilian percussionist Cyro Baptista, but more significant is Zorn's extension of his own input to include prepared piano and sampling. The sample-based pieces mostly feature atmospheres. As with the pieces for prepared pianos, these are tentative by Zorn's own standards, yet even a sparse touch Zorn seems genuinely concerned to extend his autonomy and explore new ground in a soundtrack that veers between surf music, industrial noise, throat singing and Easy Listening kitsch.

Volume six opens with a mode: Zorn surf quartet score, "Arzon Meismen", which features Ribot in Hawaiian By Godard mode and Zorn on alto, but elsewhere Zorn's main concern is to further his new interest in sound manipulation. The "Mechanics Of The Brain" score ("Same of the footstep is a lightening bolt!—even for me," John says, which is worrying) is comprised of a series of vignettes. These feature guitar/drums machine duets between Ribot and Ikuo Funai, chamber improvisations reminiscent of the earlier string quartet cut-up "Forbidden Fruit". Zorn's sound effects, and all conceivable permutations ("Mechanics" is first-rate Zorn, and demonstrates that he continues to mature as both musician and composer). If this is the best piece here, the score for *The Black Glove* is the most significant. In this work for New York's SMH "lifestyle state" Maria Beatty, Zorn sculpts a 27 minute solo soundscapes using only the sounds of fire, water, wind and footsteps. There is even attention to tension and torture, and as with previous works like *Abstruse* or *Rebels* it's great to hear Zorn in a new context. He seems to be working with ever smaller numbers of collaborators, and it's intriguing to hear him develop resources which now permit him to work not only on his own terms, but literally on his own whenever he feels it necessary. In this sense, "The Black Glove" connects full-circle with his recently released *Early Recordings* from the 70s: the sheer range and diversity of the material crammed onto these three discs is staggering. Clearly is artfully packaged and beautifully recorded, with genuinely amusing and insightful notes by Zorn. They push the *Filmworks* series right to the core of Zorn's considerable body of work.

TON OWEN

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in brief electronica

Rob Young slams into a clutch of CDs and 12"s that go bleep in the night

Freeform Hierarchy was

INTERFACE WITH SSBH CD.

Like Warp labelmates, Autschke's *Freiformen* and Simon Payk's *Appear* to be on a quest to find the smallest tracks that will have the greatest effect. His piase much has the quality of a private experience, best consumed in isolation. *Heterochry*, finally on CD after appearing as a limited edition cassette release, is 12 tracks melted into one sequence. It begins with disembodied slurs and bangs, like some loquacious IRCAM exercise, but gradually Payk's peculiar yet thoroughly engaging rhythmic control takes over, as he traces out the furthest limits of hi-fi digital sound FX units. "Adverse" slips away like a water clock, or blood dripping down a posthole. "Anti.Zik" is played on a drum machine that surely hasn't been invented yet. Nice and quiet.

Featureless AZM From Mars With

Lowes HOUSTON HOLES 034 00

Universal Being Jupiter House

HOLD 25 CD

FreePress AZH is apparently the work of one man, 25-year-old Mike Brennan, and Universal Being is the work of Brennan with drummer Rupert Brown, who's played with Nigel Kennedy and Roy Ayers. It says here *From Man With Love* sounds like a group. Brennan uses electronics to slash together percussive and funk guitar swatches into a fluid sonic collage. It doesn't always make you sit up and dance, but there are promising moments that hint at what *Sly Stone* could have done with an Atari Stringer, live drum loops make *Jupiter* the master meal of the two, although at times the rhythm merely acts as a prop to synth passages resembling the dulcet stretches of the *Fox* catalogue.

Test CPH 2000 A 0000 A000 01 T 00

Jet is Anders Remmer from Denmark, who's previously worked in the rather amorphous electronic groups Dub Tractor and Future 3. *CPH 2000* is April's first crack at dancefloor-driven Techno. If it wasn't for the intricate rhythm programming and fine-tuned feel for frequency layering, "Silver Pool" might sound like the kind of House that gets played in clothes shops, but by the time the Electro learnings of "Let's Go" and spectral organ pipe similes on "1978" kick in under TM-909 driven beats, it's clear Remmer has familiarised himself with the finer points of the American urban body slam & winner.

Metamathematics A Metamathematics

Production 0.640 0.6439 m

Presumably named after the 1500 LP by future-pop maverique John Foxe, *Metamatics* (aka Lee Norins and Dominic Kennedy) have so far cranked out four EPs of aerobic Techno, all now available on the CD. They strike out with the cosmic "Summer," which begins where Global Communication left off on 76.14 before dropping a breakdown that starts like a storm over the water surface. Like the best Clear releases, a sense of efficiency and economy of means rules the mood, but it's an approach that never leads them into austerity. On the closing "Dope Robots Reverse," *Metamatics* cover their tracks with a cloudburst of dense echo-chamber tactics, suggesting future escape routes from their binder-side sedates.

Max Raabo Band Ghost In The

Shell INFRACORE IC 024-024P

With most activity going on in the top end, and the second album from German outfit Max Rebel Band successfully sustaining the notion of Teutonic drum 'n' bass as Alec Empire/Panacea-style schizoid beats. The pace is frenetic throughout; the models here are leftfield labels like Soyuzname and Worm Interiors' bubble rubber-banded to their relentless forward motion on rocket-propelled sequences. "Ghost In The Shell" dignifies a cool club scene with snower samples and fruit machine abstractions. "Plasticurgery Horrors" and "2 Seconds 5 Minutes" both display some real tactical inter-wanged-on-deck manoeuvres, the latter minute cover "Pearl Gums" takes ages making up its mind which style it wants to settle on, then straps the bit and runs for a

Ronnie & Clyde Macro-Scope

Early the best slab from the London duo who also trade as Basilio and Aeroplane. "Parfum De R&B" is a silky piano with undercut by an errant test-tone and a snare that snags like a fishhook. "Bad Memory" morphs breakfast dances its way through samples of an 18th-century game, Latino notes and almost-out-of-earshot seely croon. More yaki soba than Scotch broth, it was patchy my drift.

Route Entelchty resource groups

This second album by London based Rupert Brewer is a vast improvement on his 1995 debut *Strain*. Germ's Tim Wright, assisting on production, brings in an element of warm-

blooded, Black Doggish tropicans on tracks like "A Frustrated Feeling" and "Pure Rapsy!," and hands in a springy remix of "Providence" at the close of play. On tracks like "Lad," you can hear a real rhythmic intelligence at work in the programming, as the best cycles in ever widening arcs outside the conventional four-square cube.

Si-kuu-dh Behind You says.

in between 1995's *Nustance* and this, Douglas Benford has evidently become hypnotized by the minuscule watch-movements of bedroom breakfast culture. To construct this first single-artist album on the Sprawl imprint, Benford traded samples and sound files with producer Scanner via e-mail — well, you know what the post's like. The result is a collection of knife-edge rhythm tracks rattling sound like biscuits in a tin, chopped up by clean-cut, nervy keyboard interventions. Highlights "Spectral Reach" and "Arbore" drive a stake into the ground opened up by recent assassinations of drum 'n' bass by Aphex Twin and Nine Inch Nails. Urban Field

Slam Slam 008? EH 1 008? CD

Never thought Erni would ever put out a record that sounded like *Everything But The Girl* (1996 vintage), but that's just what "What Is It," Slim's opening single, brings to mind. Slim is a vocalist and producer who's paired up with engineers Tom and Will from Erni's crew Masima to craft seven seethe, high-definition examples of pop-funk, with varying degrees of success. The backing tracks are more shapely than most attempts to sonify with *Electronica* (cf. *Sneaker Pimps*, *Garbage*, etc.), featuring the sound of waterwheels, brush-drums and the urbane musings of feminist Barbara Tucker, but the parts never quite add up to a full house. They should just release the alien invasion tale "Abducyed" as a single, and have done with it.

Solar X Xrsted A&P-ITC APPROVED CD

After listening to his intriguing album by Moscow's Roman Belikov, I was going to pronounce the former Soviet Union a goldmine of undiscovered talent, before a Russian native informed me this is the only good electronic record that's come out of the country. All the more reason to investigate... with its titles inspired by the call-girl cards deposited in London phone boxes, *Xtotic* recalls early *Autzheim*, but the sounds expand well outside the 'Intelligent Techno' palette of bloops and sinewaves. The artist's hand never stays invisible for long, either hi-hats flange, empty-stomach rumblings roll into the picture, machines feed around and are threaded into line.

Brian Storm *Serge Detached*

Horizon Music has vinyl, TACO 006-03
 Bryan Storm is, inevitably, the Darden

representative of Scottish weird beat duo Twitch and Brainstorm. *Some Detached* (Jag) House Music sounds like a joint cooked up in the bedroom over one spirit to many (and whoever did the sleeve — Kurt Schwitters' Photoshop fantasy — smoked some, too). *Strangled* 303s, ludicrously illogical synth solos and squishy rhythm play are calculated to cause riotous chaos on the dancefloor. "K-Fun's tan thong posing is a particular favourite: after seven minutes it evolves into a capypony not unlike the quacking of distal mallards."

Source Direct Two Masks/Block

Domina SCIENCE FICTION 12" While they don't quite scale the dizzy programming heights reached by labelmate Rhoket, the Source Direct duo's unresolved noisish chords create more convincing, clummy atmospheres of impending threat. There's no escape from "Black Domina's" sheets of cymbal, which sound like they're pouring under the door.

Twisted Science Cold Fusion

EP LEAF DOCTOR CD/12

DJ Glove Tuning Aug 2012 12'

These two go together for their sheer perversity factor. *Cold Fusion* is the latest, worryingly good grab-bag of studio acrobatics from Jon Tye, and his increasingly strange windings leave you even more disorientated as to correct reel speed and volume level. The title track is a jawdropping meld of feedback cloud, Gabba break and salon strings. "Harmonic" is uncomfortably slow grinding dub. "Pinhead" a blast of frozen carbon dioxide that doesn't curtsy its welcome, and "Bleeder" will be called just that by DJs trying to play past its locked groove onto the track that follows.

The excellently named DJ Glove, meanwhile, has released a recording of a piano tuner at work — no beats, no rhymes, no nothing on top. Beat-mis that DJ Glove you've got to hand it to him.

Various Artists *Seven Hills*

Various Artists Seven Hills

Class: Signals From The Sheffield Underground (4/10/00) 100
This compilation is the result of something like a whip-round by four separate, tiny labels from the close-knit Sheffield electronic scene. In a field dominated by Warp, it's refreshing to hear stuff from this locale that appears contemporary, flying drum 'n' bass from Babel Fish and Underflow, scuzzing breakbeat by Tonika Tox, the track which most strongly recalls 80s Sheffield ancestors Chalk. But it's the offerings from the ID Dark imprint that reinvigorate greatest. Twinkled's "Hiss" carefully unravels its rhythmic secrets to delectable "Cuch", and I Monster's "Night Of The Hurred" sounds like a mysterious rave involving a vocoder and a fistful of copper-nose samples. □

freefall

Clive Bell plunges through music's protecting veil and enters the realms of sonic absurdity. This month: planning for the future

One of the very few things I can remember from my first year at college is collecting my mail one very bright day in April. Within my pigeonhole were two notes: one from a friend concerning some mescaline, or possibly acid, which he felt we should consume at our earliest convenience. The other was a leaflet strongly advising me to start up a personal pension plan.

Well, I couldn't say that one of the notes I screwed up and the other screwed me up, but let's not be flippant. Even as I tossed it into the bin, I was mightily impressed by the persistence of the pension marketers, like Christian missionaries in Japan, they pined their faith against ridiculous odds, trying to persuade us to project our imaginations forward, leapfrogging our putative careers, into retirement. Not only had I rarely done a day's work, but the vision of life as work, more work and retirement struck me as aesthetically offensive. Moreover, pictures of golfers featured strongly in these leaflets.

Back a bit further, to 1963. After encouraging many around him to take LSD, Timothy Leary was sacked from his lecturing job at Harvard University. We can be fairly sure what ran through his mind: is any person plan safe? B-movie director Roger Corman also experimented with LSD while it was still legal (pre-1966), and shot the definitive acid film *The Trip*, starring Peter Fonda. Much less well known is Corman's *The Connection*, in which vampires dupe employees into committing to a phoney pension scheme with no tax relief and massive management charges.

Popular culture has always found drugs an easier topic to treat seriously than pension plans. Plenty of pop songs provide information about getting high and so on, but where are the ballads lamenting the failure to invest properly? Nick Cave and Elvis Costello, renowned for dealing with tricky subject matter, seem to have tiptoed around the fact that thousands of low-paid workers are locked into personal pensions which are worth less than the state pension scheme from

which they were encouraged to escape

Recently I saw something in a retirement planning brochure that really made me sit up. "An independent top-up plan can mean the difference between a comfortable lifestyle and a 'careful' existence." For some reasons these words were burnt into my visual cortex. I'd had a pretty good year, and retirement was starting to seem an attractive option (rather than an absurd check-trouser word of caddies and bunkers). I'd written some music for the Japanese computer game *Dinky Winky* (though I have to say writing the music took 30 minutes, and convincing the corporate morons at Dinky Winky to give me an on-screen credit took eight months). So that fee went up my lawyer's nose, in a word. But then I was invited to design the Dinky Winky Website. In case you hadn't heard, Website design is the new rock 'n' roll. We're talking major income rejuvenation, with of course a corresponding need for tax-free investment growth and back-dated lump-sum top-up manipulation. What can I say? These days I spend more and more time lying on the floor pondering the achievement of minimal survival in the transition from annual wage to pension. I get a tingling sensation starting in the neck, spreading in warm waves down the spine, and an orange glow all over the ceiling, ouivering. □

Label distributors & contacts

Contact addresses are given for labels without named UK distributors. Labels not named here should be available from specialist retailers such as Depth Charge, Picoadilly, Rough Trade, These, etc. In emergencies, contact likely distributors such as Cargo, Greyhound, Harmonia Mundi, Impetus, Kudos, Pennade, Recommended, RTH, SRD, These, Vital, etc.

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multi media

Louise Gray meets Project DARK, reinventors of the 7" single

Ashley Davies has blue hair and Kirsten Reynolds's is red. For a year between 1995 and December 1996, they had monthly haircuts, collected the clippings and laboriously glued them onto 12 old 7" singles. "Labourious" is what Reynolds, incredulous, "if anything it was daunting. The disgusting nature of people's dead leavings." Red one side, blue the other, the records were blank, with an intentionally weary humour, "Infringement" (w/ "Short Back And Sides"). Such jokes, one feels, are part of some unexplored, if effusive, conceptual scheme addressing issues of familiarity and disorientation. Other records released by the Project DARK duo's Singles Club label were pressed onto a 7" diameter Danish beaker ("King Beaker"/"Crumb"), a 7" diameter section cut from a Douglas fir tree ("Logging A Dead Horse"/"Chip Off The Old Block"), and a circle of etched glass ("Pier View"). Why bother doing these things? "Because it's all so obvious," Reynolds will later say. "Because" Davies will say, "it needs to be done — and in any case, the project now has its own momentum. It would be harder to stop than not."

And, indeed, they're right. Project DARK has its own momentum and one is quickly drawn in, interjecting suggestions for future records: Ham slices, Edam cheese: Black & Decker rotary blades ("£15 a throw. Too expensive," says Davies). "We did consider a bio sliced latitudinally, it could be called 'Summer Blues'," adds Reynolds. This is fun and it's astonishing how quickly you are drawn into the duo's methodology, as if they have tapped some fundamental desire in their audience to be part of it all. But they might also say they do this because music is a tangible thing and has been ever since the earliest days of recording technology, because people collect cultural objects and, as Evan Esmerberg pointed out 30 years ago in his book *The Recording Angel*, they need to make their beauty and pleasure permanent. Certainly many of the Singles Club's records — all, incidentally made in limited editions of anything from ten to 300 — exude an undeniable physical charge. The presence often oscillates between the ridiculous and the sublime; whatever its artefacts they have a muted emotional quality that it's hard to disengage from. Looking at the derelict grooves of the wooden record, you're half expecting that, once played, a life story will emerge. Sometimes, as with sculptor Jan Polonsky's fanged metal single "Bismuth", the action is reversed: "its surface has been

left untreated," Reynolds says, "so whoever actually touches it leaves moisture behind. Your fingerprints are now part of that record. It's Jan's little joke."

Jokes aside, Project DARK's records are intended to be played. Glasspaper discs, wood discs, glass, hair and steel have been regularly aired at gallery and club events since Reynolds, a fine arts graduate and phototechnician with The Bow Gamelan Ensemble, and Davies, a former carpenter and self-proclaimed aficionado of the Industrial art brigade (Thin White Duke, Throbbing Gristle, Cabaret Voltaire), came together as members of Headbutt, a group whose participation in the UK experimental scene has a levered legend of its own. Founded 18 months ago, immediately following a Headbutt European tour, Project DARK (an acronym of the duo's initials) and The Singles Club provide a forum for singles made by Reynolds and Davies under their DARK guise ("Lots of immoral dronies," they say as well as others: Bow Gamelan's Paul Burwell, Headbutt, Brand Of Pain and Mercury 4F have so far released records).

Although this work has a clear heritage — Apollinaire's recent sandpaper and food-mixer sets at London's Dossy Club spring to mind, as do Philip Jeck's turntable orchestra, Christian Marclay's *Record Without A Cover* and John Cage's *Rozztopano* — the duo are uneasy about pursuing links. "That's background history, but we're not aspiring to be like that. We do this because we have to, because we want to, because we're excited and excited. This is not calculated reinvention," says Reynolds.

Speaking in Central London, where a small Project DARK exhibition at the Metro Cinema will run until the end of April, Reynolds and Davies tell of their materials, much of it, the vinyl included, is recycled, suggesting a link with the reclamation work of Bow Gamelan. Decay and its transmutation seems to be an explicit theme in many of the artefacts. One of their most spectacular records is a diesel-propelled slip, in which a freewheel (I recommend Champagne Pops or Bananas Thunders), says Reynolds, is strapped to the record edges, which is then positioned on the turntable with the stylus on the starting groove. The freewheel is then ignited. "It takes

about seven and a half seconds it goes from 0-60 and there's a lot of rapid noise before the player's lid blows off," says Reynolds. "It's a concise idea, this smoke is contained in the box it's a beautiful image. It's also scary — there's that danger element, the anticipation — but it draws you in."

This "record" will feature in DARK's *Exotic By Gromophones*, an event for multiple turntables and a few explosions at The Klinker Club, an occasional evening of performance curated by Sue Hart and Hugh Maclellan. In the meantime, the duo are gearing up for the inevitable questions: Art? Music? Concept? Kinetic? "Crossover" is a really popular idea at the moment, but it's difficult in reality," says Reynolds. "Everyone goes, 'What the fuck are you doing and why is it so awkward to understand?' They'll understand theoretically



until you show them the idea and then they ask, 'Is it art or music?' What are you doing and why aren't you clear about it? Well, I don't even want to discuss it because we're just doing it and it works. It's for other people to decide. It's real and it happens and it makes sense in every world. It's not a difficult idea, it's really simple unless people's preconceptions make problems." Project DARK, PO Box 2879, London N7 6DF. Fax: 0171 693 0204. For details of DARK's Klinker Club performance in London this month, see *Soundings*. The Metro Cinema is at The Metro Cinema, Rupert Street, London W1. Tel: 0171 437 0757.



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In Ecstasy at Liverpool's 051 club

RAVE PHOTOS: CHRIS EASTON

Altered States: The Story Of Ecstasy Culture And Acid House

By Matthew Collin & John Godfrey
SCEPTER'S T&L P&C £10.99

Altered States is the tale of how Ecstasy came to influence culture, specifically dance music culture, in the UK. Perhaps the best recommendation of how the book depicts Ecstasy is that it makes you want to go out and take some.

Like all the best dramas, *Altered States* is character-led, picking out the main players at each stage of the drug's global impact. Whether the authors knew all the people they describe is unclear, but they certainly give the impression they did. Characters such as the rogue chemist Alexander Shulgin, the rave

public school rave promoters suddenly caught up in gangland violence, raving football thugs, self-centred bohemians and stuffy cops

emerge three dimensionally from the text, giving life to an already fascinating story as each chases their version of the Ecstasy dream (or nightmare in the book's case). Collin, who is responsible for the majority of the text, is thoughtful and insightful. He paints the development of Ecstasy culture as a continuum, tracing the drug's development in Germany during the early part of the century, its navigation by Shulgin, its manifestation in early Detroit and New York House music, through to its impact in Ibiza and knock-on effect on the UK club scene, 'Hardcore', alternative Mensajes, drum 'n' bass and finally, its rough passage into the wider public domain. It's a panoramic historiography, an

overdose of information and facts leading to an explanation of drug-induced cultural phenomena rather than any particular conclusion about the long-term social effects of Ecstasy. Collin places music and Ecstasy in a wider context than its own smokes chemistry, observing both in their entanglement with politics, commerce and the law.

The authors trip up in the opening chapter, falling for the utopian notion of a chemical revolution. In fact what the book does well is demonstrate the inability of minority groups to mobilise the masses into anti-establishment behaviour, despite exhaustive attempts. For a brief moment Ecstasy held the promise that it could effect this change, make society and the individuals in it somehow 'better', a dream that finally collapsed in the wake of the very public death of schoolgirl Leah Betts.

As the authors tellingly point out, the only subject that has incited mass protest and cross-class, cross-cultural demonstration in recent years has been the poll tax and its threat to people's bank balances. While Ecstasy and all-night raves were shored upon as the path to self-awareness, the Freedom To Party demonstrations against the anti-rave Criminal Justice Bill in Trafalgar Square attracted only a small crowd, yet the anti-demo party pulled in thousands.

Altered States concludes with a fascinating investigation into the supposed dangers of taking Ecstasy. The evidence presented against the drug is anything but conclusive, though it does puncture one myth, that 'bad E' (that is Ecstasy mixed with miscellaneous nootropics such as heroin, rat poison, even glass, was not the cause of the deaths of Leah Betts or the

Hanger 13 savers (they appear to have died as the result of dehydration, or in Leah Betts's case, over-hydration, neither of which can be directly attributed to their use of the drug). In fact, E was and still is rare, though the more potent "true E, MDMA," has been replaced by its harder relative MDA. The book leaves one question unanswered: It is widely agreed that E is not what it used to be, but why? Why did the supply route of MDMA dry up?

Reading *Altered States* can be a depressing experience. It is written with a real sense of speed and energy but leaves you exhausted and disillusioned. The commentators with the after-effects of its subject matter are too obvious to miss. That's not a reason to avoid it: the authors' first-hand knowledge of dance music's multiple strands (both as ex-editors of *i-D* magazine) produce valuable insights, demystifying some popular duo culture myths along the way. There's humour too, particularly in the period when the authorities had little idea of the nature of Ecstasy culture. Colin relates a legendary incident outside London's Astoria when police turned on their searchlights to frighten ravers only to receive ecstatic chants of "Can You Feel It?" in return. Unbeknown to the police, their flashlights were reproducing the hook to one of the top dance tracks of the moment (by a young Todd Terry), and had unwittingly reignited the dancers' fervour.

But *Altered States* is ultimately a book about failure. The failure of white society to treat black music with any respect, the failure of the government to treat its public with respect, the failure of alternative groups to profoundly influence popular opinion, and the failure of drugs to change the world. What's new?

JAKE BARNES

The Music's All That Matters: A History Of Progressive Rock

By Paul Stump

QUARTET BOOKS (Pbk £12)

No other genre in the history of popular music has been so mercilessly vilified as 70s Progressive rock. In recent years even Easy Listening, for its long deemed unworship of



Police break up a Spiral Tribe rave

serious critical attention, has acquired a shilly shally, chic, albeit dubious. But there have been clear signs that Prog is bouncing back, this time thinly disguised in German ovals! Yes, it's now OK to like Krautrock, though for many years Amor Dux, Tangerine Dream et al were abused by a host of post-punk critics, but it's still not safe to stick out your neck for the British groups of the Progressive era ("Wish shit like Keith Emerson and Rick Wakeman all over the news." — the considered opinion of Krautrock sampler author Julian Cope in *The Wire* 131). Hence Paul Stump's somewhat defensive opening in *The Music's All That Matters*, the Preface is subtitled "Author 'Not Mad' Shock".

No, Stump is certainly not barking. His history of British Progressive rock (the book's all-encompassing title is something of a misnomer) is far-minded, rigorously argued, lucidly expressed and not without anecdotal humour (blame mainly to Bill Bruford and John Peel). This is not a fan's-eye whitewashing of events, picking out the good and sweeping the unwholesome stuff back under the carpet, nor is it a nostalgic trip down memory lane for die-hard amorals. Stump realises the necessity to tackle Prog's historic excesses, where they exist, head-on. "I have, therefore, steered myself for furious reproaches from fans of Caravan, Camel, Renaissance and others," he explains, "and musicians whose already under-40s egos have been rendered yet more volatile by years of neglect (justified or otherwise)." His overriding concern is to put Progressive rock into context: "It deserves a fair trial".

What makes Stump's study especially valuable is that it is virtually without precedent. Beyond the cursory references in pop/rock encyclopedias, the occasional essay in academic journals, notably *Popular Music*, probably the only earlier, widely available and satisfactory analysis of Prog is Alan F Moore's 1993 book *The Penny Test*. Where Moore's "critical rehabilitation" of Prog is principally based on close muscological analysis, Stump supplements his analyses (frequently with references to Moore's insights) with generous attention to the cultural and ideological factors (politics, economics, sex and race) which formed the broader notion of



The Beatles invent Prog: rehearsing Rubber Soul, 1965

"Progressive". Early chapters trace the influence of jazz, Beat poetry, 60s psychedelic counterculture and English art schools in establishing a bourgeois, Progressive ideology which promoted the "Romantic idea of individual genius." We look in at London's "underground" UFO club which showcased the pioneering work of Pink Floyd and Soft Machine, and where countercultural "happenings" were used up by businessmen eager to make a killing out of this enormously lucrative lifestyle commodity. Likewise, The Beatles' and George Martin's transformation of the pop song is also considered seminal, particularly their studio tape experiments and inclusion of non-Western elements. Unfortunately, Stump drops a nasty clanger by getting wrong the date and details of George Harrison's first use of sitar on "Norwegian Wood", here regarded as a key transitional moment. Actually, this track featured on the December 1965 album *Rubber Soul* and not on *Revolver* (1966) as stated, and was therefore released the same year as The Yardbirds' "Stell Mi Saff", which also suggested an Indian influence.

While Prog's ideology was fundamentally bourgeois, its personnel was motley. Contrary to popular myth, not all the protagonists were drawn from the middle class, or were public schoolboys, and few had been to the Royal College Of Music or any other illustrious musical institution (Yes's Jan Anderson was a former Accrington milliner). Many graduated from teenage R&B or psychedelic groups where "musicianship" was not virtuous but usually elementary and self-taught. They simply latched on to the latest Next Big Thing, tiring up their old blues formulations with futuristic Ploogs and mellotrons, classical pomp

and pastoralism, and sub-literary lyrics. Of course Prog was a white-dominated, but so too were R&B, blues rock, hard rock, jazz rock, Heavy Metal, Techno Ambient, Jungle, soul rock, even the New Romantics, for God's sake.

You can count the number of consistently group-breaking, truly "Progressive" UK groups on the fingers of both hands — Henry Cow, King Crimson, Gentle Giant, Van Der Graaf Generator, plus parts of the Canterbury scene like Soft Machine, Egg and Matching Mole — who demonstrated an ideologically flar for pushing rock form beyond its blues foundations by absorbing influences from avant garde jazz, contemporary classical, folk and free improvisation. Stump does valuable work on these groups, though arguably devotes more energy to the commercial rise and fall of the mainstream giants like Yes and Emerson, Lake & Palmer (Pink Floyd and Genesis continue to travel in big money) in whom he rightly finds occasional moments of inspiration — the former's *Relayer*, the latter's adaptation of *Musicology's* *Pictures At An Exhibition*. However, his high praise for The End (infinitely whiffy) and Jan Anderson's Ollus (a rare fairly renowned beggars' belief). Chapters dealing with supergroup collapse during a cash-starved industry's reallocation of resources to cheaper-to-finance punk/new Wave product, and Prog's hideous "postmodernist retreat" as Marillion et al make interesting, yet uncomfortable reading, especially for die-hards. Peter Hamill and Robert Fripp are appropriately awarded the title "Splendid Isolazionist", Anthony Phillips and Mike Oldfield are less deserving cases.

Among the important omissions are Family, who displayed remarkable agility across a range of idioms, enjoying success in both UK

singles (rare in Prog) and albums charts. Bill Nelson's Be-Bop Deluxe, again for dramatic versatility, and for preserving the move to melodic consonance in certain areas of the post-punk landscape, and strangest of all, an almost whimsically ascertained Brian Eno, whose pre-Ambient albums are among the most inventive of the Progressive era. Eno's claim to be a non-musicalist established him as an oppositional figure within Prog in a prevailing climate of aspirant instrumental virtuosity; his use of the studio-as-instrument and patiently approach to sound (a Progressive minimalist) marked him out as an influential innovator (ironically, Paul Schütze, a musician who emerged partly as a consequence of Eno's influence, is featured).

These points apart, Paul Stump has made a starting effort to get Progressive rock back on the critical agenda. Hopefully his work will also stimulate open-minded readers to sample the delights, and avoid the pitfalls, of this fascinating genre for themselves.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Do I Come Here Often? Black Coffee Blues Part Two

By Henry Rollins

21581 (PRK 1715)

Like a rock 'n' roll take on Ian Sinclair's *Lights Out For The Tenorist*, *Do I Come Here Often?* is a great catalogue of random travel, late night

van journeys, hotel room epiphanies, and meetings with madness.

Henry Rollins has thrown together a collection of published/unpublished interviews, tour journals and trailers and watched them cohere into an investigation into the nature of success and failure in modern American rock 'n' roll. He does this by employing the neat stylistic trick of juxtaposing a chapter on himself and his experiences on the road, with one documenting a meeting with some genuine (here artist) or rock maverick. Many of the musicians featured, and that includes Rollins, give the impression that they could never have done anything else, but few are able to articulate exactly what it is that has eaten up their lives, caused them to live out of vans, marginalized them from society and, in some cases, cost them their sanity.

Take, as an example, Jerry Lee Lewis, still averaging "75, 1000 shows a year", lunging off stage out of fever but about to record a new album when Rollins met him in 1995. "I believe the younger generation will get into this record," he tells Rollins. "I think they're been waiting. They have been buying all this old song stuff that they've been re-releasing, they have been buying a gallon, a bucketful of them. So they are going to buy this album, I believe." After MTV agree to have Jerry Lee on the channel (only on the condition that Rollins interviews him), it's almost heartbreaking to hear The Killer confide, "Think this is an honour. MTV is what all the kids are watching." Elsewhere Rollins finally gets to meet The

Flickers Of The Dreamachine

Edited by Paul Cecil

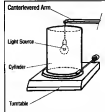
00083 (PRK 4795)

Developed in the early 1960s by artist Brian Gysin from original plans by mathematician and artist Ian Sommerville, the Dreamachine is, according to this collection of essays on the machine by a motley crew of fringe culture types, "a voyage into the art and magic of inner space." That sounds more like an advertisement for the revamped *Star Wars* movie than a description of "a valid instrument of perceptual psychology."

The machine itself, a patterned, hollow cylinder that rotates on a turntable around a central light source, is rather like the 19th century Phenakistoscope, which created the illusion of moving figures and patterns from a series of single-frame images. Dubbed a "psychic cinema," the Dreamachine triggers "visions" by disrupting the brain's electrical rhythms, and has been used as a tool of inspiration by artists and musicians since its invention. However, thanks to some glib comments from Gysin ("some people see and others do not"), the Dreamachine sounds more like a hic, a counterintelligence version of a Magic Eye painting.

Undeniably there are links between the stimulus of light and the brain's rhythms. W. Grey Walter's extended essay, one of the more insightful chapters in the book, follows through this theme, focusing on the origins and nature of animal electricity. Similarly, an intelligent article by Ian MacFarlane contextualizes the Dreamachine historically, referencing Ginzburg's experiential poetry, film makers John Whitney and Jordan Belson, and Duchamp's experiments with spinning discs, *Rotory Demisphere*.

These valuable texts are discredited by the contributions of a number of other



writers, particularly Genesis P. Orridge, who seems to have let-eyed his brain during his California "exile." After an introduction that reads like a repeated portion of the *Star Wars* script, soaked in metaphors of Light, Space and Time in phony Boleyn fashion, Gysin cuts to his own experience with the Dreamachine, recounting how his four-year-old daughter's use of it affected her in such a significant manner that her face "became more and more Neolithic. Bubbles appeared, muscles tightened, and then she looked like one of our ancient ancestors must have looked." Simon Strong's closing essay, "Sterilizer," examines the sparsely loose connections between the deaths of Nirvana singer Kurt Cobain and Hole bassist Kim Duff and their apparent use of the Dreamachine. Strong dismisses the almost obligatory CIA and Mafia conspiracy theories only to toss us with some "bizarre and unexpected" "conclusions that could not be published in this volume for lack of space and research smelt. Urr! Fuck it!" (Friends Understanding Kurt) I will uplevel substantial evidence for these links. I will continue with my support group FAGS (Friends Against Gobbledygook Speaks) Dream on.

BORN REMALDO

(Available from Codex Books, PO Box 148, Hove, East Sussex BN3 3DQ)



13th Floor Elevators' Roky Erickson while trying to publish a book of his lyrics, despite the fact that Roky refuses to help with the book or even acknowledge its existence. He asks Rollins if taboos are strings holding him up. Later Rollins watches a video of The Elevators to-synch "You're Gonna Have Me" on American Bandstand in the 60s. "To see his face then, so sharp and handsome," he writes of Erickson. "At the end of the show the screen flashed Happy Birthday, Roky! It made me cry."

Ultimately, it's Rollins writing about himself that's the most rewarding part of the book. His mood veers from misanthropic but he's funny with it, as when he gets pissed off with a group of loud students on a plane. "How great would it be to take a length of pipe and randomly club some of these young travelers like seal pups while the rest of the economy section looked on in shocked and grateful disbelief!"

to bouts of self-doubt and black depression. The images that stay with you are of Henry the good guy, visiting a young fan who's dying from leukemia, bleeding at the mouth as he tells Rollins how "at night he gets scared because he's afraid to die in his sleep. He said that if he was going to die, he wanted to be awake." That was one of the most intense things I have ever heard someone say. 17 years old. "Or Henry the displaced kid, wishing he could have been a better son, had a better father, returning to his old home in Cincinnati, the streets where he used to hang, and feeling like a stranger, nowhere to go but back in the van and on to the next gig, never any closer to understanding why, wishing, "I'll get out before I gets too gross." But where will you go, Henry? You can't go home anymore.

DAVID KISHAN

new notes at a glance information from SPNM

april

1 The Smith Quartet - New Works

Volans, Emmerson***
Mackey, Hus*
FR RFFH

3 Opus 20

Hughes*** Patterson,
Pitt, Britten
GC

4 Royal Scottish National Orchestra

Schubert, MacMillan***
Nelson
Usher Hall, Edinburgh EHF
0131 228 1155

4 Ian Pace plays

Howard Skempston
Skempston, Newman,
Zimmermann
QEH RFFH

4-7 BEAST rumours... 97

Dhormot, Stollery, Karlsson,
Whist
New Sadler Theatre, Canon Hill
Park, Birmingham B12
0121 449 3035

5 modern britain 5 series

Dillon, Moore, Redgate,
Erber, Boulez
GC

5 Royal Scottish National Orchestra

Schubert, MacMillan,
Nelson
Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow
0141 287 5511

6 London Sinfonietta Voices

Cardew, Stockhausen
QEH RFFH

6 Music on a Spring Evening

Hughes*** Britten, Weekes,
Tomkins, Greaves,
Monteverdi, Gostoldi, Fritz,
Dowland
Bough House, New End Square,
London 0171 354 5195

7 Barbican Celebrity Recital

Kanchell*** Schubert
BH

7 Words to Music

Sweeney*** O'Leary***
Farrell*** LeFanu*** Wilson***
GC

8 National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain

Beethoven, Messiaen,
Strauss
BH

9 Andrew Keeping, guitar

Alberitz, Duarte, Hunt***
Tennor, Carrasco,
Takemitsu, Barriot, Welton
FR RFFH

9 Academy of St Martin in the Fields

Kaumann, Schubert, Heydn
QEH RFFH

11 Endless Parade

Cage, Xenakis***
Rabe*** Sandstrom
Adrian Beale Hall, Birmingham
Concerts, Birmingham B3
0121 236 5622

11 Philip Mead, piano

Messiaen
West Road Concert Hall,
Cambridge CB1 01223 594444

13 Oxford Festival of Contemporary Music - Spring Series

Alberitz, Bedford, Bursell,
Cesha, Gordon, Harvey,
Montagu, Redgate,
Pinnissey, Zaher, Siewer,
Skempston, Tooley, Ellis,
Payne, Hodgkinson, Roberts,
Fidler, Jackson, Riddington
Josephine du Pré Music Building,
St Hilda's College, Oxford OX1
01865 261384 or 796600

13 Endless Parade

Elberitz, Rabe,
Sandstrom*** Rinkqvist
Adrian Beale Hall, Birmingham
Concerts, Birmingham B3
0121 236 5622

17 Lontano - 21st Anniversary

Jones, Rodt*** Pook,
Maxwell*
JSS

17 Ian Pace, piano

Schönberg,
Stockhausen, Cage,
Cardew, Johnson***,
Parsons*** Skempston,
Beethoven, Xenakis
Keele's Yard, Castle St,
Cambridge CB3 01223 352124

17 Continuum Ensemble

Dallapiccola, Berg arr.
Hesslein, Schroyens***
Schönberg, Solomin, Rihm
Hale St Church, Thirer St,
London W1 01355 225100

18 International Piano Series

Ives, Bach/Busoni, Regor
QEH RFFH

18 Tom Phillips - 60th Birthday Celebrations

Phillips, Birtwistle,
Skempston, Feldman,
Beckford, Cardew
Josephine du Pré Music Building,
St Hilda's College, Oxford, OX1
01865 261384 or 796600

19 Apartment House and Tom Johnson

35 Bach, Gubinski, Xenakis,
Feldman, Parsons***
Skempston, Wolff, Johnson,
Webster, Feldman, Huber,
Crane
Keele's Yard, Castle St,
Cambridge CB3 01223 352124

19 New London Chamber Choir with Critical Band

Okeghem, Baintbridge***
Stravinsky
Merton Chapel, Oxford,
OX1 01865 261384 or 796600

20 Martin Joseph, Jazz Pianist and Composer

Joseph, Monk, Mingus,
Nichols, Coleman, Powell,
Lucy
St Hilda's College, Oxford, OX1
01865 261384

21 Composer's Choice - Endymion Ensemble

Weir, Rushton*** Stravinsky,
Britten
FR RFFH

22 Schubert Ensemble of London

Britten, Hummel, Novak***,
Fauré
JSS

24 An Airy Split Costume***

Johnson*** Verne
JSS

24 Miracles Gladstone Field***

Royal Albert Hall, Kensington
Gore, London SW7
0171 589 8212

25 Ian Pace plays Skempston

Skempston*** Parsons***
Cage
CH 0181 948 6615

25 Hawksmoor Music Projects

Rawl, Pinnissey, Messiaen
Londale House, Waverley
Park, London W6
0181 548 8716

25 Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Mendelssohn, Bruch,
Messiaen Davies***, Stravinsky
BH

25-26 Electric Spring 97

Hyde, Ferran, Cage
St Paul's Hall, University of
Huddersfield, Huddersfield HD1
01484 472015

26 Brunel Ensemble

Debussy arr. Walters,
Hollaway, Cooney,
Tooley***, Wagner
Victoria Rooms, Bristol, BS1
01222 563676

26 The LONDON 20 Hodson***

Southgate, Dvornik
St Cyprian's Church, Glasshouse
Square, London NW1
0181 670 9839

*27 SPNM Opera & Music Theatre Project

Venue in London to be confirmed
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27 Music of Today

Clapton,
MacMillan
RFFH

30 Academy of London

Mozart, Haydn, Rabe, Wien
JSS

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*1 SPNM event

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Premiere

** UK Premiere

* London
Premiere

BH: Barbican
Hall, Silk Street,
London EC2

0171 638 8891

CH: Conway
Hall, Red Lion
Square, London
WC1

GC: St Giles
Cripplegate,
Barbican Centre,
London EC2

0171 638 8891

JSS: St John's,
Smith Square,
London SW1

0171 222 1061

RFFH,
QEH RFFH2,
PR RFFH3: Royal
Festival Hall,
London SE1

0171 960 4242

WH: Wigmore
Hall, 36 Wigmore
St, London W1

0171 935 2141

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TOUCH

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AND WHAT ABOUT THE CHICKS IN ALABAMA?

6th

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| 101 You Are Here , Joel Henderson, S'Barres, Defunkt, Sergio Mendes, Barry Anderson | 121 Elvis Costello's Jukebox , Charles Gayle, Boleslaw Kurowski, Bert Bonchinsky, Angeles Kugel, Rapunzel Ltd, Music in the 21st Century | 151 The Fall , Sheila Chard, John Harjo, Majical Power, MCA; Shadow, John Collier's Jukebox, Rapper Eric, Triam Am, Daw Cunningham, Scope, NYC Ambient |
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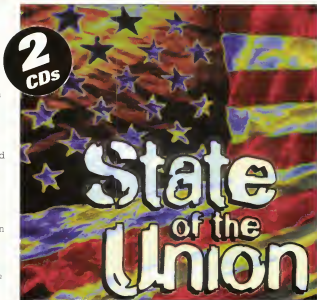
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THE WIRE

david toop

The fragmented life of a time-travelling music columnist

Struck, I was, by the Fragonard-inspired porcelain girl-on-a-swing ornament (or *tableau*, since ornament seems too pallid a word for the vile ambition of the thing) showcased in the window of a local charity shop. With potential for violent dominance in a lounge, the swinging girl could have been a Jeff Koons maquette, all cream and gilt, later to be scaled up to terror proportions and set in the centre of Tiananmen Square, financed by a joint commission from the Chinese government and the CIA. "Needs repair," a charity worker had written in felt tip. "Needs smashing," I thought.

The repeated act of pulverising myself after dark with Johnny "Guitar" Watson's astralistic "Space Guitar" must have unleashed the children of the night, for I discovered, with some alarm, my computer's insistence on today's date being, now and forever in a Groundhog Day holding pattern (and here I click <insert date>) 27 August 1996.

As a point of information, "Space Guitar" was recorded on 1 February 1954, oh viral demons of the aethernet, and before you, the reader, suspect yourself duped into buying an oldies fanzine (my favourite of which was always *Kicks* out of New York City, which redeemed its perpetual high blood pressure over "English faggots", ie The Beatles through to Spandau Ballet, with Esquerita and Hassi Adkins interviews and surf specials), I should interject some cohesive thematic nonsense to justify a page that starts at the top and finishes at the bottom.

But why, in petulance, should I find myself engaged with the whole business of archival aesthesis and so thoughts about kitsch, nostalgia, redemption, history, perceived value, cultural endurance, time viruses, salvage and storage, memory and pleasure go tumbling about the cranial vault. Why order that tumble? After all, it's 1996 here in London N8.

Continuing in a falling motion towards the foot of the page, the post delivered up a selection of 7" singles (now referred to with curled lip among Tony Euro-sceptic cabots as the 28 centimetre single). I can't remember the last time I was sent 7" vinyl, and even then, it bore scant resemblance to these things, released by Project Dark in a series called 'singles dub' and pressed on great gaudy, gleamingly sweet biscuits, aromatic slices of Dogstar Fir jig, multicoloured bar or glasspaper, mostly limited editions of 15 or even 20 copies. Playing them was out of the question, since the technology in this house is fucked up enough as it is, so I looked at them and, with a happy sense of the appropriate, listened to a sandblasted slab of carbonaceous, solidified fish glue composed and



decomposed by Merzbow, I looked, touched, sniffed (though didn't lick).

Talking to Derek Bailey on the phone about his concert with Pat Metheny at New York's Knitting Factory and the moment when Metheny turned on his expensive heavy artillery, producing a sound that replicated the earth-trembling impact of an industrial tunnel boring machine.

I had wanted to write about Mark Knopfler's television film on Varese, particularly after a conversation with Mark during which he had broached the subject of Varese and his participation in improvisation sessions with Charles Mingus and Ted Macero, Macero being a reed playing member of the Mingus Workshop. But my VCR is no longer functioning, so preventing me from watching Japanese films as I giggle helplessly over the subtitled misapprehensions listed in *Sex And Zen & A Bullet In The Head*, ie "God! I've got buste. Insert!" Or "Quet or I'll blow your throat up."

Macero, not listed in any reference book of mine, his friendship with Varese, a connection revealed in interview with Kevin Martin for his *Jazz Scavenges* compendium, a growing feeling that music history books, Cultural Studies theses and reference tomes will be so much landfill by the year 2020.

In a month of surprises, listening to Toru Takemitsu's last album, a dancous, serene collection of pop songs, traced and laced with chanson, enka, bossa nova, tango nuevo, Sylvian, Zappa and Roland 808 drums, all sung by Sen'i Shikawa, who looks not a bit Japanese.

Coincidentally, I was e-mailed by a man embarking upon a biography of the Technics turntable (hmmmm?) and looking for guidelines: e-mail at your own risk, because I will get a public rise out of these requests in recompense for my time. I'll concede that the subject has interest: who was the first DJ to use a Technics SL12 1200 and what happened next? Any music-related issue extraneous to sound has interest, if only

because of its ingenuity in pulling our attention away from sound.

Reading an interview with Rei Kawakubo. Her concern lies with fabric and the body, the definition of the body, the way the body defines the shape of fabric and fabric can redefine the body. Totally opaque to interviewer and fashion world.

So this interest in the nature of things: sound and its carriers.

Music theorists and errant scribbles play some part in music's history, yet so do the technological carriers.

A night of drinking wine and listening to my Syreeta albums with my favourite harddresser. We briefly talked about vinyl, and about the difference between nostalgia and reminiscence.

Not particularly prone to nostalgia myself, though tediously susceptible to reminiscence, I could list certain vinyl curiosities in my collection with a hoarder's pleasure: an orange vinyl Chinese-Hawaiian 10" EP, green and red Chinese language instruction flexidiscs, green vinyl Korean Confucian music albums given to me by the potter Bernard Leach, a 7" flexidisc of Raudive's recordings of the alleged voices of the dead, a Bo Diddley EP with the photo of his pink fur guitar on the sleeve, an Aleksei Crowley poetry 7", the aforementioned Syreeta albums that will never appear on any TV advertised Motown Best Of... collection, and even the Malo albums that I bounced onto after that blast of "Space Guitar", only to find the screaming erotic delirium of Jorge Santana's guitar sailing over timbales and congas played by Coke Escovedo and Victor Pantoja exhilarating beyond belief, then remembering a time when this music meant drinking pale rum mixed with condensed milk and then having sex, rather than writing a column.

I believe you have to be a maggot brain. That's the answer. □

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